

**SOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES FOR ABUSED WOMEN IN SHELTERS:
PERSPECTIVES OF SOCIAL WORKERS**

by

Anna Sithole

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SUPERVISOR: Ms R M Skhosana

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DECLARATION

I declare that “*Social support services for abused women in shelters: perspectives of social workers*” is my own work, and that all sources have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Mrs Anna Sithole

.....

Date: March 2018

Student number: 7882718

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ABSTRACT

Violence against women is a global phenomenon and it has over the past three decades occupied a central position in international discourse. Despite the extensive literature, little has been documented about the social support services offered to the abused women in shelters. A qualitative research approach was employed in this study to explore, describe, and contextualise the experiences and challenges of social workers in the social support services rendered to abused women in shelters. The participants were selected using purposive sampling, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with social workers involved in rendering services to abused women in shelters in Gauteng. Ethical issues were taken into consideration. Data were analysed using Tesch's eight steps (in Creswell, 2009) and verified using Guba and Lincoln's model (in Krefting, 2003) to test the trustworthiness of the data.

The key findings of the study highlight the important role that social workers who provide social services to abused women in shelters play in the process of empowerment and protection of these women, who benefit from the social support service programmes that the shelters render on a daily basis. These findings also reveal that due to limited resources, the social workers cannot provide these social support services effectively without assistance. This study also reflects the need for a multidisciplinary approach, and emphasises the need for other stakeholders such as the SAPS, Health, Home Affairs, Department of Social Development, and the embassies of foreign countries to play a more significant role within the sheltering services in order to provide a comprehensive service to abused women. It is clear that social workers have limited professional support and experience many challenges in rendering social services.

Keywords: Abuse, Experience, Social support services, Social Worker, Women, Women abuse

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LIST OF ACCRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------|---|
| BWM | Battered Women’s Movement |
| CSVR | Centre for Study of Violence and Reconciliation |
| CP | Care Plan |
| DSD | Department of Social Development |
| DoL | Department of Labour |
| EPWP | Expanded Public Works Programme |
| GBVCC | Gender-based Violence Command Centre |
| HOD | Head of Department |

| | |
|--------|--|
| IDP | Individual Development Plan |
| IFSW | International Federation of Social Workers |
| IPV | Intimate Partner Violence |
| MDG | Millennium Development Goals |
| NCPS | National Crime Prevention Strategy |
| NDP | National Development Plan |
| NEHAWU | National Education Health Allied Workers Union |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| NPO | Non-Profit Organisation |
| NLDTF | National Lottery Distribution Fund |
| PCA | Person Centred Approach |
| POWA | People Opposing Women Abuse |
| SACSSP | South African Council of Social Service Professions |
| TLAC | Tshwaranang Legal Advocacy Centre |
| UNICEF | United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund |
| VEP | Victim Empowerment Programme |
| WHO | World Health Organization |

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CHAPTER 1

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

In this chapter, the researcher briefly discusses the background and context of the study, and illustrates its scope and significance. In addition, the motivation; theoretical framework; research question; primary goal and objectives; research methodology; research method; preparation; methods used for data collection, data analysis and data verification; ethical considerations; and clarification of key concepts are discussed. The chapter concludes with an exposition of the structure of the study. It should be noted that the terms “women abuse” and “violence against women” are used interchangeable throughout the report to denote various forms of violence experienced by women.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Violence against women is a global phenomenon and it has over the past three decades occupied a central position in international discourse (UNICEF in Damenshie-Brown, 2013). The high level of violence against women is particularly alarming and it continues to have worrying and lasting consequences on survivors (South African Integrated Programme of Action, 2013 - 2018). South Africa is reported as one of the countries with the highest number of violence and violence-related injuries in the world (Mhango, 2012; Norman, Schneider, Bradshaw, Jewkes, Abrahams, Matzopoulos & Vos, 2010).

In their report, Norman et al. (2010) and Jewkes (2002) argue that the root causes of violence lie in South Africa’s history of apartheid and its socioeconomic realities, including high levels of inequality. Violence in any form to any person is viewed in a very serious light by the law and society. Women, however, have been the “most victimised and vulnerable members of society” (UNICEF in Damenshie-Brown, 2013). Violence destabilises social and economic development; it encourages cycles of poverty and inequalities; and it hinders progress towards realising the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the National Development Plan 2030

(NDP), and the realisation of human rights (South African Integrated Programme of Action, 2013 – 2018; Jewkes, 2002).

The report by the World Health Organization (WHO) (2013) reflects that at least 30% of women globally are affected by intimate partner violence, and it is the most prevailing form of violence against women. It is estimated that in the United States millions of women are terrorised by their husbands or male partners who use violence as one of the tactics to control their wives or female partners. Most of the literature on domestic violence focuses on men controlling women in intimate relationships (Bartlett & Rehse, 2013). The impact of abuse affects families across the United States of America and cuts across all socioeconomic, racial, cultural, and ethnic groups (Bendall, 2010). Statistics from the National Coalition against Domestic Violence reveal that one in every four women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime (Damenshie-Brown, 2013). This is supported by the information from the Department of Justice and the Constitutional Development Report which estimated that one in every four women is subjected to domestic violence (Bendall, 2010).

It is estimated that in South Africa a woman is killed by her male partner every six hours, the highest death rate by domestic violence in the world (Slabbert, 2014). The impact of domestic violence is far-reaching, with serious consequences not only for the abused woman, but also for her children and society at large (Slabbert, 2014). Despite vigorous efforts by various service providers to curb violence against women, this disturbing phenomenon seems to be on the increase throughout South Africa, as alluded to by the WHO (2013) and Mhango (2012).

Various responses to the abuse of women have been developed in the public domain in post-apartheid South Africa, including increased services to protect and assist women, policy and legislative reform, and the provision of institutional support (Rasool, 2012). Between April 2008 and March 2009, 12 093 women in Gauteng Province alone – 0.3% of the adult female population – reported an assault by an intimate partner to the police. During the same period, 18.1% of women in the province reported an experience of violence at the hands of intimate

male partners (Vetten, 2014). Jewkes (2002) argues that it is estimated that one in three women is emotionally, physically, or sexually abused by her partner. Research done by the Centre for Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSV) has determined that in South Africa, on average, a woman is killed every six days by her intimate partner (Mathews, Abrahams, Jewkes, Martin, van der Merwe & Vetten, 2005).

According to Ntjana (2014) and Rasool (2012), very few women are aware of the existence of shelters and the role they play; this is not a reflection of the inadequacy of the women themselves but, instead, indicative of poor outreach and access to social services. Some abused women seem to lack all knowledge of the existence of social workers, and others seem unaware of the role they could play in domestic violence situations (Rasool, 2012; Vetten, 2014). Women also lack awareness of the role and existence of domestic violence shelters. In most instances, women arrive at shelters as a result of incidental encounters with informal networks, usually when they are greatly concerned for their own safety or the safety of their children (Ntjana, 2014). The study by Rasool (2012) further recommends that social workers and other mental health professionals should receive training on the detection and appropriate intervention in domestic violence situations so that when women do reach out to them they can receive appropriate help. Even though there are enough documented research studies based on violence against women, little has been documented on the social support services rendered to abused women in shelters (Ntjana 2014; Bhana, Vetten, Makhunga & Massawe, 2012; Dangor, Alderton, Taylor, Park & Fedler, 2000).

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

The study conducted by Mhango (2012) found that “violence against women in South Africa is a serious and prevalent challenge for all and it is, however, often unrecognized and underreported.” Although men are sometimes victims, the vast majority of victims are women (UNICEF, 2006). At least one in every three women, globally, has been beaten, coerced into sex, or abused in one way or another, most often by someone she knows, including her husband or another male family

member. One woman in four has been abused during her pregnancy (UNICEF, 2006).

The organisation UN Women (2012) contributes to research knowledge when it confirms that violence against women is manifested in a continuum of multiple, interrelated, and sometimes recurring forms. The different types of violence involve physical, sexual, psychological/emotional, and economic abuse and exploitation; and they have been experienced in diverse settings across both private and public spheres. Some of these forms of violence include partner violence, sexual violence by non-partners, marital rape, date rape, stalking, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, domestic homicide, and harmful traditional practices such as forced child marriages and female genital mutilation (Vetten, 2014; Dangor et. al., 2000). In addition, Rasool (2012) identified some of the most common and most severe forms of violence against women: intimate partner violence; sexual abuse by non-intimate partners; trafficking, forced prostitution, exploitation of labour, debt bondage of women and girls; physical and sexual violence against prostitutes; sex selective abortion; intimate femicide; the deliberate neglect of girls; and rape of women in war.

The Department of Social Development National Strategy for Sheltering Services Report (2012) highlighted the plight of victims/survivors who exit the shelter system; they experience challenges in finding safe accommodation due to a lack of second-stage housing. Some of these survivors are resolute, however, and make the decision to move on with their lives but because of the difficulty in finding safe accommodation they often have no choice but to return to the perpetrators and/or abusive families. Against this background it should be noted that, for the purpose of this study, the focus will be on exploring the perspectives of social workers on the social support services rendered to abused women in shelters.

Slabbert (2014) asserts that, because of the sensitivity of the subject, violence is almost universally under-reported. Nevertheless, the prevalence of such violence suggests that, globally, millions of women are experiencing violence or living with its consequences without getting any assistance. In the field of domestic violence,

evaluation studies by Groenewald (2006) and Vetten (2005) outline the results of an evaluation of programmes through a developmental quality assurance process within shelters for abused women in Gauteng Province.

A study on abused women's shelters (Vetten, 2014; Bhana et. al., 2013) focused on the reduction of incidents of violence by providing protection to female victims of abuse, while other studies (Hahn & Scanlon, 2016) have focused on the role of shelters, advocacy services for abused women, and domestic violence prevention programmes. Little has been written about the experiences of social workers in rendering social support services for abused women (Hahn & Scanlon, 2016; Vetten, 2014; Rasool, 2012; Bendall, 2010). The research base is not yet sufficiently comprehensive to indicate whether other types of support programmes such as transitional housing, peer group support, and advocacy services are effective in improving the health, safety, and wellbeing of female victims (Bendall, 2010).

Social workers play an important role in ensuring professionalism within the shelter setting. The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) (2014) defines social work as a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promote social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. The principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility, and respect for diversities are central to social work. Studies reveal that social work services consist of casework, group work, community work, as well as therapeutic services designed to provide parenting education, family counselling, and family support (Patel, 2015). Social work services also include concrete services such as income support, institutional placement, mental health services, health services, supervision, education, independent living, housing, medical services, legal services, socialisation, nutrition, and respite care (Patel, 2015). The scope and intensity of casework, therapeutic services, and concrete assistance to adults in family violence interventions are often not well documented, and they vary within and between intervention programmes.

According to Hahn and Scanlon (2016), the social work profession first identified violence against women through child protection efforts that originated during the late 19th century. Today, social workers provide social support services to empower abused women, create an enabling environment, and prepare them for reintegration into the community; and also to equip them with skills, knowledge, and expertise to continue leading normal lives after exiting the sheltering services (Hahn & Scanlon, 2016). While addressing parental neglect and abuse, social workers learned that often mothers were also victims of violence at the hands of their husbands. But this was a challenge that could not be addressed until abuse against women was seen as both a social and political problem. Survivors and feminists in the US collaborated in forming the Battered Women's Movement (BWM) in the hope of bringing about social change in respect of gender equality, and advocating on behalf of all abused women. This movement was instrumental in developing shelters in the United Kingdom and United States of America (Hahn & Scanlon, 2016).

In December 1993, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. This is the first international human rights instrument to deal exclusively with violence against women (Moeketsi, 2013; UN Handbook for Legislation, 2010). The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 identified the elimination of all forms of violence against women as one of the 12 strategic objectives and listed concrete actions to be taken by governments, the United Nations, and international and non-governmental organisations (Damenshie-Brown, 2013; UN Handbook for Legislation, 2010). The role of social workers who work within the shelters for abused women is to provide psychosocial support services to these women on a day-to-day basis through counselling and support, protection, and care.

Shelters constitute one of a number of channels designed to address and prevent family violence. In South Africa, each province and territory has a ministry or department responsible for family violence, including woman abuse (Hahn & Scanlon, 2016). In their study, Patel and Hotchfeld (2012) and Gray (2010) reported that in South Africa, the social welfare services are delivered largely by NGOs that

are state subsidised in a collaborative partnership arrangement with government. The same sentiment is shared by Patel and Hotchfeld (2012) who claim that the pluralist model of service delivery is widely used in other countries such as the United States and, to some extent, the United Kingdom.

Patel et al. (2012) further report that the South African NPO sector is divided into two parts. The first is known as the formal welfare sector, which consists of well-established organisations – partly subsidised by the state, some of which are contracted to deliver services on behalf of the state such as residential or statutory services (largely in the field of child protection). The second part is known as the informal welfare sector, and includes much smaller community-based organisations (CBOs) which function individually and often in isolated conditions, are unpredictably resourced, and mostly unorganised (Patel et al., 2012). According to Patel (2015), the social welfare services specifically target children, youth, women, older persons, and people with disabilities and chronic illnesses, amongst others. Aside from delivering traditional protection and therapeutic services, the developmental welfare policy envisages interventions which would support and grow local community initiatives through community development, local economic development, income generation and microenterprises, among other initiatives, to promote the livelihood capabilities of the poor. It is worth noting that this study will explore experiences of social workers in providing social support services to abused women who are based in formal welfare non-profit organisations (NPOs) that receive government subsidies.

Government departments are typically responsible for funding not only shelters, but also community-based services such as prevention, public education, and counselling programmes for women, children, and men (Patel, 2013; Patel et al., 2012). Stakeholders such as government, municipalities and non-governmental organisations provide a broad range of social work services designed to prevent domestic violence (Vetten, 2014). According to the Department of Social Development National Shelter Strategy (2009), there were 106 funded shelters in 2009 but after the review process during 2013/2014 it was found that there were 88 funded shelters run by non-governmental organisations that accommodate abused

women in South Africa. Social workers in health care, public assistance, substance abuse treatment facilities; and that religious and counselling settings should have the skills to make referrals and provide resources to help women to live in safety (Macy, Nurius, Kernic Holt, 2005). Social support services include counselling and advocacy for victims of abuse; family and caregiver support programmes; alternative living arrangements, including out-of-home placement for children, community protective programmes for abused elders, and shelters for abused women; and educational programmes for those at risk of abusing or being abused (Patel et al., 2012).

Several organisations have developed guidelines, as indicated by Hahn and Scanlon (2016), on how practitioners can better identify, support, and refer victims of violence. These actions result from a growing recognition that violence represents a serious violation of women's human rights, is an important cause of injury, and constitutes a risk factor in many physical and psychological health problems. The National Department of Social Development is responsible for the development of the core intervention strategies and programmes that guide service delivery for victims of crime and violence (The National Policy Guidelines for Victim Empowerment, 2009).

These intervention strategies include crisis management of abused women and their children by providing accommodation, counselling, life skills programmes and empowerment, as well as skills development programmes (The Social Development National Strategy for Sheltering Services, 2013 - 2018). The services are organised, regulated, largely urban, and are represented by national councils that are umbrella bodies of welfare agencies (Patel et al., 2012). However, a significant gap between the intention and actual implementation of policy remains, and the structural obstacles to the realisation of policy vision and goals have been widely documented (Gray, 2010; Loffell, 2008). The South African Integrated Programme of Action (2013 – 2018) and the Department of Social Development White Paper on Families (2012) outline a general range of existing interventions and new measures, and highlight the need to work together across government and across the community for the prevention of, and response to, violence. The South

African Integrated Programme of Action that aim at addressing the root causes of violence against women and children rests on three main “pillars” for the achievement of its goal, namely prevention and protection, response, and care and support:

- **Prevention and protection**

The report by the South African Integrated Programme of Action (2013 - 2018) highlights that “prevention and protection are at the core of the South African Integrated Programme of Action with emphasis on addressing the root and underlying causes of violence against women and children” to halt it before it occurs. The focus is specifically on transforming attitudes, practices, and behaviours to ensure that all South Africans reject violence against women (Rasool, 2012).

- **Response**

The South African Integrated Programme of Action (2013 - 2018) is a comprehensive, integrated system which provides consistent, coordinated, and timely social support services to women who have been victims of abuse and violence. This programme advocates emergency caring related to the physical and mental health of abused women; and provide safe accommodation in shelters, counselling services, and access to justice, which would enable survivors to escape and recover from violence (Bendall, 2010; The National Policy Guidelines for Victim Empowerment, 2009; 365 Day National Action Plan to End Gender Based Violence, 2007).

- **Care and support**

Actions under this pillar focus on prioritising the safety, wellbeing, and long-term empowerment of women, while ensuring the accountability and rehabilitation of perpetrators to reduce re-offending (The South African Integrated Programme of Action 2013 – 2018). Dangor et al. (2000) assert that shelters which provide counselling services to abused women are regarded as an important intervention service in addressing the trauma experienced by these women;

however, owing to a lack of professional staff such as social workers in these shelters, the focus is mainly on preventative strategies such as awareness campaigns.

Dangor et al. (2000) further argue that survivors of violence are not the source of the problem, but rather the lack of financial and human resources. The organisations that offer counselling are doing valuable work in the form of damage control (Dangor et al., 2000). Counselling services help the victims to manage the reality of the traumatic experiences that they have to endure. It also creates an environment for the victims to tell their stories in a calm and protected environment and unpack their feelings during and after the incident (Dangor et al., 2000). It provides for therapeutic sessions and allows victims of abuse to participate in the decision-making process which affects their lives (Rasool, 2012). Counselling and therapeutic services are processes that are conducted by social workers and other registered counsellors within the organisations that provide services to victims of crime and violence (South African Integrated Programme of Action, 2013 - 2018).

Crisis intervention services are available to victims of family violence from a variety of organisations, as identified by Kurst-Swanger and Petcosky (2001). In South Africa there are toll-free lines run by government and non-governmental organisations such as Child Line, Life Line, and the Gender-Based Violence Command Centre (GBVCC); operated 24 hours a day, seven days a week (Bendall, 2010). These toll-free lines provide crisis intervention services such as counselling, information regarding the justice system, and referral to other relevant service providers. Toll-free lines are managed by social workers and other specialised, trained volunteers. They are also linked to the South African Police Services and medico-legal services. The study by Bendall (2010) cites the example of the centre-based, human rights-based, non-governmental organisation in Cape Town that provides a number of services to victims of domestic violence, including a 24-hour crisis response; specialised counselling; a residential shelter for abused women and children; free legal assistance; and job-skills training, by encouraging economic empowerment. The research study

by Bendall (2010) concluded that there are a number of successful policies and strategies that have been developed in order to respond to women's needs after they have experienced violence. The reality, however, is that despite such measures having been implemented many women still choose not to report domestic violence.

According to Vetten (2014) and Moeketsi (2013), the National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS) was developed in 1998 and was implemented in 1999. The Victim Empowerment Programme (VEP) falls under pillar 1 of the NCPS. Victim empowerment is defined by Nel, Koortzen, and Jacobs (2001) as the process according to which the victim is restored to a state as closely as possible to that which existed prior to the offence. The programme has a victim-centred approach to crime and strives towards developing knowledge of victim issues, strengthening resources, addressing the needs of victims, improving volunteer participation, and the prevention of secondary victimisation. The priority target groups are women, children, youth, men and boys, older persons, those living with disabilities; and victims of human trafficking, sexual offences, and domestic violence (National Policy Guideline for Victim Empowerment, 2009).

The National Policy Guidelines for Victim Empowerment was launched in 2009, and the Norms and Minimum Standards for Victim Empowerment Services were developed in 2013 in order to be implemented within the victim empowerment services, such as shelters and white-doors safe spaces of hope that can be accessed by abused women. They were also to be implemented in order to improve and upgrade these services by all relevant stakeholders such as social workers in shelters, health workers, the police, and others. Some of the challenges the Victim Empowerment Programme has encountered are the inadequacy of the facilities available to victims of crime and the geographic spread of such facilities, the lack of dedicated VEP staff in provinces and regions, the non-alignment of national and provincial VE structures, and inadequate training of the VEP staff from government and civil society (Moeketsi, 2013; Nel et al., 2001).

According to Werksmans Attorneys' report (2014), the Department of Social Development lists the following as victim empowerment services and programmes, which focus on counselling, trauma therapy, debriefing, play therapy for children, legal services, life skills education, and skills development:

- **Peer support groups**

The most common auxiliary service offered to abused women in the social service context is peer or support group counselling (Vetten, 2014). According to Tutty (2006), a peer support group service for abused women is one of a number of social support services whose goal is to provide for the needs of abused women but which is experiencing difficulties in doing so. Most of the peer support groups described in the literature can be considered psychoeducational, since they offer information about intimate partner violence in addition to providing opportunities for women to interact with each other (Augusta-Scott et. al., 2017).

Peer support groups may be offered through a shelter, social service agency, religious group, or any other community organisation. One of the benefits of support groups is that they are instrumental in reducing social isolation, one of the significant effects of being abused by an intimate partner. Members of support groups provide encouragement to each other, allowing women to see that their reactions to the abuse are not unique (Tutty, 2006). The support groups are facilitated by professional therapists, paraprofessionals, or victim advocates who generally focus on identifying group members' feelings about being victimised, education about domestic violence, skills building, and self-protective behaviours.

- **Advocacy services**

The role of the advocate is to inform the client of her legal, medical, and financial options; to validate her feelings of being victimised; to facilitate her access to community resources; to assist her in goal setting and making choices; and to provide emotional support (Moeketsi, 2013; Dangor et al.,

2000). Advocacy services are typically provided to the abused women by shelter staff or trained lay persons in the community, but also by self-identified survivors of domestic violence (Rasool, 2012). Advocacy services may be provided in a shelter, community agency, or by a telephonic hotline. Advocacy services are frequently offered by communities in conjunction with emergency shelters and more formal individual counselling or support groups. The study by Mhango (2012) reflects that radio talk shows, community awareness and education, and newspaper articles should be encouraged as additional forms of spreading the message about domestic violence and contributing to advocacy services. Most agencies have trained volunteers as legal and medical advocates to accompany victims to police departments, courtrooms, and hospitals (Rasool, 2012 & Vetten, 2014).

The rendering of services by social workers to abused women comes with challenges and shortcomings. There is a lack of professional staff, such as social workers, to render social support services in shelters; therefore, non-professional staff, volunteers, and community-based workers continue to render social support services. These challenges perpetuate secondary victimisation (Bhana et al., 2013). There is also a lack of adequate social service professionals to provide therapeutic psychosocial services to the victims of crime and violence to address the trauma and post-traumatic disorder experienced by the victims who have been exposed to violence over a long period of time (Werksmans Attorneys, 2014). Vetten (2012) identified high staff turnover, lack of funding, lack of skilled staff, and the inability of shelters to retain professional staff to render these services, stipulated in the Norms and Minimum Standards as having a strong influence in the provision of effective and efficient services to victims of abuse.

According to a study conducted by Rasool (2016), it is critical that awareness be created about the role that social workers and shelters can play in helping abused women deal with the violent experiences they have endured. Ntjana (2014) recommends that social workers must have the competency to identify signs of addiction and dependency and to establish linkages with other social problems. The researcher argues that social problems are evolving as society changes, resulting

in continuous changes in clients' needs. This demands that social workers remain updated on relevant strategies and theoretical frameworks to respond to these demands. Ntjana (2014) asserts that social workers should be capacitated through in-service workshops and post-graduate studies aimed at improving the knowledge base of supervisors and social workers. It is critical to improve the working conditions of social workers in regional and local offices by improving their remuneration and incentives such as danger and rural allowances which will boost their morale and motivate them to focus on service delivery.

The case study in Limpopo Province conducted by Mhango (2012) on the guidelines for integrated social work practice in the empowerment of abused women, reflects the need to employ more social workers in shelters to provide the social support services to abused women. The study also highlights the shortage of other professionals in the sector of victim empowerment. One of the recommendations from the study by Skhosana (2013) is that the shortage of social workers and work allocation should be taken into account to ensure effective social welfare service delivery. Dangor et al. (2000) and Bendall (2010) argue that shelters have increasingly become a feature in service provision for abused women in South Africa. Most shelters are negatively affected by their limited access to and control over resources in assisting women to regain individual and/or social control. The effectiveness of rendering services should facilitate the process of empowerment, especially when all required standards are adhered to.

There is a shortage of affordable low-cost housing or other accommodation for abused women, and poor access to state housing assistance in terms of individually owned, rental, and group housing for independent living (Werksmans Attorneys, 2014). Currently, once the victims of crime and violence exit the shelter system, they often have no choice but to return to the perpetrators owing to the lack of independent housing. Women may also lack important resources that force their return to their partners. This perpetuates the cycle of violence and entrenches dependency, and the perpetrators continue to have power and control over their victims (Bhana et al., 2013). It is difficult, however, to gauge the number of women who do in fact return to their abusive partners (Bhana et al., 2013). Some shelter

residents do not disclose their intentions because they believe that staff might disapprove. Other women decide to separate from their abusive partners but sooner or later do return. Against this background, there seems to be more understanding that the process of leaving an abusive relationship is long and difficult and that the important issue for shelter staff is to support each woman, whatever her decision.

According to Vetten (2014) there are no legal remedies specific to domestic violence other than a general High Court interdict. Instead of legal protection, women are offered services via the voluntary welfare sector derived from the partnership between the church, government, and private initiative. Vetten (2012) further notes that currently there is no legislative provision for the regulation of South African shelters for victims of domestic violence and the services that they provide. Werksmans Attorneys (2014) argue that the Department of Social Development is listed as the lead department with regard to the VEP; and its responsibility is to co-ordinate, manage, and facilitate the development and implementation of victim empowerment policies, services, and programmes. Its target groups are women, victims of gender-based violence, victims of sexual assault and rape, abused children, abused people with disabilities, victims of human trafficking, and victims of hate crimes; however, there is no express mention of a mandate of functions to establish or fund the building of shelters for the above-mentioned target group.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

According to Maxwell (2013) and Kumar (2011), the formulation of a research problem is the first and most important step of the research process. It can be compared to a scenario of deciding upon a destination before undertaking a journey. These authors state that in the absence of a destination, it is impossible to identify the shortest, or indeed any, route. Furthermore, the identification of the problem can be viewed as the first effort by the researcher to mould and formulate the problem (Fouché & De Vos, 2005). The formulation of a problem introduces the necessity of clearly defining all the concepts used in determining the variables and

the relationships among them (Maxwell, 2013; Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006). The problem statement describes the context of the study, and it also identifies the direction which the research study should take. The context within which it is presented should be provided and briefly explained, including a discussion of the conceptual or theoretical framework in which it is embedded.

Based on the background provided, the researcher attempts to gain clarity on what she needs to research by formulating a problem statement. The problem statement will be formulated as: There is a lack of research-based knowledge on the social support services rendered by social workers to abused women in shelters. Little accurate information exists on the social work support services offered to these women (Feder & Wilson, 2005). The study by Groenewald (2006) focuses on the evaluation of programmes of shelters for victims of abuse in Gauteng Province, and outlines the results of an evaluation of programmes through a developmental quality assurance process within shelters for abused women in Gauteng Province. The research of Bendall (2010) focuses on the impact of abuse on affected families. The report by Mpata (2011) describes the personal experiences of victims of violent crimes, while Slabbert (2010) focuses on the experiences of low-income female survivors of domestic violence, and the strengths displayed by abused women. Various responses to the abuse of women have come to light in the public domain (Rasool, 2012) but little has been documented on the social support services offered to these abused women.

According to Dey, Thorpe, Tilley, and William (2011), there is inadequate psychosocial support services provided to the victims of crime and violence by relevant stakeholders within the criminal justice system owing to the shortage of social workers and psychologists in the country. The study by Phaswana-Mafuya, Peltzer, Mlambo, Mkhonto, Banyini, and Tabane (2010) reports a general lack of human resources, especially social workers, in the shelters and a poor quality of VEP services. Shelters have also been instrumental in raising general awareness about the serious and life-threatening consequences of men's violence towards women (Vetten, 2014; Tutty, 2006). In the past few years, shelters have been a central and critical resource, which provides safety and support to abused women

and an understanding of the dynamics of this phenomenon (Vetten, 2014; Bendall, 2010; Tutty, 2006). The shelters no longer work alone, but function as one of a range of services to abused women and children. When women enter a shelter to escape an abusive relationship, they are at a critical point in their lives; they may either make the transition to a new life without abuse, or revert to the cycle of violence either with an ex-partner or in a new relationship in which the abusive patterns are repeated. It is critical therefore for abused women to receive effective social support services that will equip them with the expertise and knowledge to be aware of, and deal with, abuse if they once again fall prey to a cycle of abuse.

Based on the above-mentioned background, the researcher concluded that there is a need for qualitative research in order to deepen the understanding of the social support services rendered to abused women in shelters. The study aims to ascertain whether these services have been developed and structured to meet the needs of abused women, and redress the scourge of violence against women. The study further identified and discusses the types of social support services, the quality of the services, and how often these services are rendered to abused women.

1.4 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The rationale behind a research study is to determine its significance in the arena of abuse against women, and to convey the importance of the problem to different groups that may profit from reading and using the study (Creswell, 2014). Franklin (2012) defines rationale as the "why bother question" and claims that a research question may be lurking here. The rationale stipulates the researcher's personal reasons as well as her more ambitious aims for embarking upon this project, particularly when confronted by different philosophies. It gives direction to the project but that direction does change, and aims and objectives are refined or overturned along the way (Denscombe, 2012). Pertinent points should be embellished upon and proven to be accepted as convincing.

The interest in conducting this study emanated from the researcher's experiences as coordinator in the National Department of Social Development responsible for

the development of strategies concerning sheltering services. The researcher has conducted workshops with shelter coordinators and managers as well as regional social workers from the Department of Social Development responsible for the management of sheltering services. During her engagements, the researcher observed that, more often than not, when a woman is experiencing violation at home or within the community, she is referred to a police station to report the case; and when her life is then threatened, police will refer the victim to the nearest shelter as prescribed by the Domestic Violence Act (Act 116 of 1998) for her safety and protection. These women live in shelters for a short period but it is not clear what will happen to them or where they will go when they exit the shelter system.

The majority of abused women who are accommodated in these shelters have experienced physical violence, rape or sexual assault and verbal, emotional and psychological abuse (Jewkes, 2002). In most cases the abuser is either the partner or a male family member. Recently, the researcher has received complaints from women from shelters across the country regarding the ill treatment of some women accommodated in shelters for abused women. When women leave a transition house they face numerous challenges. Women are at considerable risk of further violence when they separate from a partner. If a woman decides to leave her abusive relationship, she must be concerned for the safety of not only herself, but her children as well. This has led to many questions regarding the social support services offered to the abused women accommodated in shelters, and has prompted the researcher to focus her study on this issue, in particular the effectiveness of social support

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical perspective in qualitative research becomes a transformative perspective that shapes the types of questions asked which, in turn, inform the methods of data collection and analysis; and how to act upon the calls for action or change (Creswell, 2014). Theory serves as an orientation for gathering facts since it specifies the types of facts to be systematically observed, because the elements or variables of a theory are logically interrelated and, if relevant theory exists,

hypotheses or research questions can be deduced based upon the particular relationship between these elements (Creswell, 2009).

This study is predicated upon the social development approach and a strengths-based approach which will be discussed below. The two approaches assisted in exploring and describing the social support services for abused women in shelters from the perspectives of social workers.

1.5.1 Social Development Approach

Social development theory is a synthesis of normative theory that accounts for its strong social rights and social justice orientation and people-centred development theories that aim to improve the welfare of the population along with economic development (Patel & Hochfeld, 2012). Developmental social work is the practical and appropriate application of social development knowledge, skills, and values to social work processes to enhance the wellbeing of individuals, families, households, groups, organisations, and communities in their social context (Patel, 2005; Midgley, 2014).

Social workers involved in social development are primarily concerned with community-based interventions that mobilise local people to participate in a variety of projects designed to improve local conditions. A key element of the social development approach as expounded in the White Paper on Welfare, is the importance of harmonising social and economic policies (Patel & Hochfeld, 2012).

1.5.2 Strength based perspective

The strengths perspective is thus a suitable theoretical approach for a proposed qualitative study (Slabbert, 2014). A strengths-based approach concentrates on the inherent strengths of individuals, families, groups, and organisations and deploying personal strengths to aid recovery and empowerment (Centre for Human Services in Slabbert, 2014). Slabbert (2014) supports the strengths approach which enables social workers to explore and describe the strengths of abused women such as hope, resilience, pride, healing, and wholeness; and lastly, personal qualities, traits, and virtues that are identified. The strengths-based approach values the capacity,

skills, knowledge, connections, and potential in individuals and communities. Focusing on strengths does not mean ignoring challenges or converting struggles into strengths. Practitioners working in this way have to work in collaboration, helping people to help themselves (Engelbrecht, 2010). In this way, people can become co-producers, and not passive consumers of support.

According to Pattoni (2012), Strengths-based approaches value the capacity, skills, knowledge, connections and potential in individuals and communities. Focusing on strengths does not mean ignoring challenges, or spinning struggles into strengths. Practitioners working in this way have to work in collaboration - helping people to do things for themselves. In this way, people can become co-producers of support, not passive consumers of support. The evidence for strengths-based approaches is difficult to synthesise because of the different populations and problem areas that are examined in the literature. The strengths approach to practice has broad applicability across a number of practice settings and a wide range of populations. There is some evidence to suggest that strengths-based approaches can improve retention in treatment programmes for those who misuse substances. There is also evidence that use of a strengths-based approach can improve social networks and enhance well-being(Pattoni, 2012).

Strengths-based practice is a collaborative process between the person supported by services and those supporting them, allowing them to work together to determine an outcome that draws on the person's strengths and assets. As such, it concerns itself principally with the quality of the relationship that develops between those providing and being supported, as well as the elements that the person seeking support brings to the process (Duncan & Hubble, 2000).

The strengths perspective does not turn a blind eye to the problems or pain that abused women experience. It guides social workers to identify, build on, and mobilise these women's personal strengths (Slabbert, 2014). Strengths-based practice is a collaborative process between the person supported by services and

those supporting them, allowing them to work together to determine an outcome that draws on the person's strengths and assets. As such, it concerns itself principally with the quality of the relationship that develops between those providing and those receiving support, as well as the elements that the person seeking support brings to the process (Duncan, 2000).

Both the social development approach and the strengths-based approach focus on prioritising human beings as having the potential to effect change in their lives. These approaches also place an emphasis on improving the lives of the poor and other vulnerable groups, in the belief that all human beings have potential and when their strengths and qualities are realised they can be integrated into the social and economic life of the community (Blaikie, 2007; Guthrie, 2010). Both the social development and strengths-based approaches link well with the phenomenon under study as the researcher focuses on the social support services for abused women in shelters, from the perspective of social workers.

The utilisation of the social development and strength-based approach was deemed suitable for the envisaged study since the two approaches assist social workers in identifying and building on the strengths and capacities of those supported by these services, as a means to help them resolve problems and deliver their own solutions. Slabbert (2014) suggests that the rendering of social support services should be directed towards assisting abused women to achieve their goals, realise their dreams, and overcome their own inhibitions and misgivings to face and challenge a community that might disparage them. The women should be viewed as capable, motivated and resilient, and should be respected. The strengths perspective assumes that clients have a number of competencies and resources that may be used to improve their situation.

In order to ensure the applicability of the strengths-based approach and the developmental approach in the provision of social support services to abused women, the research questions are structured in such a way that research participants would realise the importance of identifying the strengths of the women who are accommodated in shelters, while at the same time applying the

developmental approach during the rendering of social support services. The researcher structured the research questions in such a way that they highlight or uplift the strengths-based aspects of these abused women by participating in the process of developing their social support services, and that women should have a role in making their own decisions. The questions also assist social workers in understanding the important role these women play in the process of the provision of social support services in shelters.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTION, PRIMARY GOAL, AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The research question, primary goal, and objectives of the research are discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

1.6.1 Research question

A research question is defined by Denscombe (2012) and Bless, Higson-Smith, and Kagee (2006) as a tool to determine what we want to find out. It can take the form of questions, propositions, or hypotheses and although these alternatives appear to be different from one another, they do have some aspects in common. The research question poses questions that are vital in addressing the key concerns of the research. It pinpoints exactly what the researcher needs to determine if the research is to add value to the knowledge about the topic under study. The research questions are fairly precise and specific and the questions asked are not vague or abstract. Research questions give an explicit vision of the kind of data that will be collected in the empirical phase of the research, and they occupy a pivotal position in research (Creswell, 2014).

Throughout the research process, the researcher tried to be aware of how her own assumptions about the phenomenon under investigation might influence the way she formulates her research question and the issues she may highlight in the interview guide. The researcher had to be aware of and be able to reflect on her prejudices, biases, and her opinion with regard to the phenomenon under discussion. She had to formulate her interview questions and the goal of the study

objectively, and ask open-ended questions that would not influence the responses to that which she wanted to hear as an outcome.

For the purpose of exploring the experiences of social workers with regard to social support services rendered to abused women in shelters, the researcher formulated the following research question:

- What are the social workers' perspectives with regard to the social support services for abused women in shelters?

In order to answer the research question, the researcher was informed by the following goals and objectives of the study:

1.6.2 Research goal

The goal is defined as the aim of the research, and it is concerned with the direction that the study will take, its targets, the benefits involved, and the scale and scope of the proposed investigation (Creswell, 2014; Denscombe, 2012; Babbie, 2007). Kumar (2011) also points out that in qualitative studies, the overall objective and aim are to explore as much as possible, as the research progresses. The author states that the strength of qualitative research is in the flexibility of the approach and the ability to incorporate new ideas while collecting data. Structured statements that bind a researcher to a predetermined framework of exploration is not a preferred practice in qualitative research.

The goal of the study:

- To develop an in-depth understanding of social support services for abused women in shelters, from the perspectives of social workers in the Tshwane and Johannesburg regions, Gauteng Province.

1.6.3 Research objectives

According to Creswell (2007) and Denscombe (2012), research objectives refer primarily to the overall purpose of the research. There is a shift in emphasis from the abstract to the concrete, and an effort to translate its aims into matters of substance and which take the form of problems to be solved. In addition, Kumar (2011) and Wallimans (2011) point out that an objective indicates the central thrust of the study whereas the sub-objectives identify the specific issues that are to be examined. The objectives of the study should be clearly stated and be specific in nature. Each sub-objective should delineate only one issue. Action-oriented verbs such as “determine,” “find out,” and “ascertain” should be used in formulating sub-objectives, and numerically listed.

The following are the research objectives employed in this study:

- To explore and describe the social support services for abused women, from the perspectives of social workers in Tshwane and Johannesburg.
- To conceptualise the social support services for abused women within the context of social development and a strengths-based approach.
- To explore and describe the strengths and challenges experienced by social workers who offer social support services to abused women in the shelters in the Tshwane and Johannesburg regions, and to ascertain how challenges can be addressed to provide effective services.
- To obtain a sample of social workers in the employ of the shelters who render social support services to abused women in the Tshwane and Johannesburg regions, Gauteng Province.
- To conduct semi-structured interviews guided by open-ended questions in an interview guide to explore the experiences of social work in relation to social support services rendered to the abused women.
- To sift, sort, and analyse the data obtained according to the eight steps of qualitative data analysis constructed by Tesch (in Creswell, 2009).

- To analyse and interpret the data and conduct a literature study in order to verify the data.
- To draw conclusions and make recommendations to enhance the social support services for abused women in shelters in the Tshwane and Johannesburg regions, Gauteng Province.

The following section discusses the research methodology, research approach, and the research design.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The application of the following research methodology, research approach, and design will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

The term “research methodology” is sometimes used merely as a more impressive-sounding synonym for method, but there is more to it than that (Franklin, 2012; Neuman, 2005). This authors define research methodology as referring to a particular sort of undertaking, an investigation of the aims, concepts, and principles of reasoning of some disciplines, and the relationships between its sub-disciplines. Franklin (2012) further claims that research methodology can be an object of study, an academic discipline in itself. Creswell (2009; 2007) opts for the expression “strategies of inquiry” instead, when he distinguishes between research methodology as a strategy and the particular techniques/methods used to conduct research.

Research methods are often divided into two main types, namely quantitative and qualitative methods (Creswell, 2014). According to Creswell (2009) and Neuman (2005), quantitative research is essentially about collecting numerical data to explain a particular phenomenon, while qualitative research uses non-numerical data. The quantitative view is described as “realism” or sometimes “positivism,” while the world view underlying qualitative research is viewed as “subjectivism.”

The researcher opted to implement a qualitative research approach for the purpose of the study. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research is meant for

exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problems since it allows the researcher to gain data through informal contact with the participants. The researcher considers this approach to be appropriate to gain holistic insight by exploring and describing the nature of social support services rendered by social workers to abused women in the shelters since there is limited research-based knowledge on the social support services rendered by social workers to abused women in shelters.

1.7.1 Research approach

According to Creswell (2014; 2010) and Carey (2012), research approaches are the plans and procedures for research that span the steps from broad assumptions to the detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The selection of the research approach is based on the nature of the research problem or issue that is being addressed, the researcher's personal experiences, and the audiences for the study. In addition, Kumar (2011) points out that there are two major research approaches to gathering information about a situation or phenomenon. This author states that during the research study it will be necessary to collect the required information while, on the other hand, the information is already available and needs only to be extracted. The author emphasises that the process of analysing data critically is the purpose of a study, and a researcher needs to have a clear understanding of the characteristics of the population of interest such as their educational level, age structure, socioeconomic status, and ethnic background.

Qualitative studies are open-ended and create research opportunities designed to lead the researcher into unforeseen areas of discovery within the lives of the people being studied (Creswell 2014; Carey, 2012; Babbie, 2009). The purpose of qualitative research is to understand and interpret social interactions, while quantitative research aims to test hypotheses, look at cause and effect, and thus make predictions (Creswell, 2014).

The following characteristics for qualitative research were applied, as noted by Creswell (2014):

- ***Qualitative research is conducted in a natural setting:*** The researcher collected data in the field at the site where participants experienced the issue or problem under study. She conducted interviews with the social workers who offer social support services in the shelters, which is their natural setting. The participants were able to show the researcher their work environment, office space, and introduce her to their colleagues. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with these social workers for periods of 45 minutes to one hour per interview.
- ***Qualitative researchers are seen as primary instruments for data collection and analysis:*** Data were collected through human interaction such as interviews rather than through inventories, questionnaires, or devices. The researcher collected data by conducting semi-structured interviews with the participants. Given the researcher's prior experience in the Department of Social Development, she was aware that her experiences could be perceived as leading to preconceived notions and bias in her study. She therefore engaged in a process of continuous self-reflection and applied the technique of bracketing to limit researcher bias. Bracketing can be defined as a scientific process in which the researcher holds his or her previous experiences of the phenomenon being studied in abeyance to limit its impact on how the researcher perceives and describes the phenomenon (Vogt, Vogt & Gardner, 2014; Roman & Apple in Yin, 2011).
- ***In qualitative research, the researcher focuses on learning the meaning that participants hold about the problem or issue:*** The researcher was interested in the experiences of the social workers who provide social support services to abused women in shelters, the challenges they experience, and what suggestions and recommendations they put across to improve these social support service.
- ***Qualitative research makes use of inductive data analysis:*** In qualitative research, researchers build patterns, categories, and themes by organising data into increasingly abstract units of information. The inductive process

entails working back and forth between themes and databases until a comprehensive set of themes has been established. The researcher will use Tesch's model of data analysis as cited in Creswell (2009).

- ***Qualitative research is descriptive:*** The researcher was interested in the description, meaning, and understanding gained through the participants' words.
- ***Qualitative research focuses on process:*** The researcher was concerned primarily with the process, and to accommodate the different experiences of the participants.
- ***Qualitative researchers undertake interpretive inquiry:*** A qualitative researcher reflects on what he or she observes, hears, and understands from the clients' perspective. The researcher's interpretation cannot be separated from her own background, history, context, and prior understandings. The researcher applied reflexivity throughout the study, considering that she was working with the shelters and that her experience and knowledge could influence the process and outcome of the study.

The following section focuses on the research design that enabled the study to attain its research goals and objectives.

1.7.2 Research design

According to Bless, Higson-Smith, and Kagee (2006) and Carey (2009), research design relates to the specification that the most adequate operations are to be performed in order to demonstrate that a particular research question is correct. In contrast, Creswell (2009) prefers to use the term "strategies of enquiry" instead of "design" when defining qualitative design. These strategies originate from discipline and flow throughout the process of research. The qualitative research design differs from the quantitative research design in that it does not outline the formal step-by-step process to be followed during the research process, but that the researcher's choices and actions will determine the design or strategy (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2005).

For the purpose of this study, a qualitative research approach was utilised with the aim of exploring, describing, and contextualising the phenomenon of the study (Creswell, 2014). The researcher was able to explore the magnitude of the problem to be studied, and systematically explored and described the perspectives of social workers who render social support services for abused women in shelters.

In the present research study the following research techniques were used for data collection.

1.7.2.1 Exploratory

Exploratory research is often conducted in new areas of inquiry where the goals of the research are to discover the magnitude or extent of a particular phenomenon, problem, or behaviour in order to generate initial ideas about that phenomenon or to test the feasibility of undertaking a more extensive study regarding that phenomenon (Bhattacharjee, 2012); Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) point out the purpose of exploratory design and emphasise that it generalises qualitative findings based on a few individuals from the first phase to a larger sample gathered during the second phase.

As little is known about the social support services rendered to abused women, this study explored the social support services for abused women from the perspectives of social workers in shelters in the Tshwane and Johannesburg regions. An exploratory research design was employed to elicit more information about the phenomenon under study. The researcher asked open-ended questions by using semi-structured interviews with the assistance of an interview guide to explore the experiences of the participants. This enabled the participants to share information on their day-to-day interaction with these abused women; what the social support services that they provide entail; whether there are any benefits that the abused women receive from these services; and how often they receive these services. Through self-reflection, the researcher was able to avoid being judgemental and biased as to the values and beliefs pertaining to the phenomenon in question.

1.7.2.2 Descriptive

Wallimans (2011) and Denzin and Lincoln (2005) argue that descriptive design relies on observation as a means of collecting data, and attempts to examine situations in order to establish the norm. Descriptive design predicates that what can be predicted, can happen again under the same circumstances. Observation can take many forms, depending on the type of information sought. People can be interviewed, questionnaires distributed, visual records made; even sounds and smells can be informative. Of importance is that these observations are written down or recorded in some way in order to facilitate subsequent analysis (Wallimans, 2011).

The researcher used semi-structured interviews to describe the social support services offered to the abused women in shelters in Gauteng Province. There were impediments to providing social support services, and suggestions to overcome such hindrances with a view to formulating practice guidelines, as described in this study.

1.7.2.3 Contextualise research design

The researcher opted to employ a contextual research design or strategy in this study. According to Mouton (2006), with a contextual research design phenomena are studied because of the intrinsic interest that they generate; also, contextual design aims to produce an extensive description of the phenomenon within the context of the unique setting and domain of the phenomenon (Babbie, 2010; Burns & Grove, 2010).

The researcher's intention was to gain an in-depth understanding of the barriers to, and solutions for, effective social support services to abused women in shelters in Gauteng Province, from the perspectives of social workers. Only social workers involved in rendering social support services to abused women formed part of the interviews. Furthermore, only shelters from the Tshwane and Johannesburg regions formed part of the study. The participants were interviewed in their natural settings, namely in their offices based at the shelters.

1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The application of the research methodology, population, sampling, and sampling methods will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

1.8.1 Population, sampling, and sampling methods

1.8.1.1 Research population

A population is defined by Guthrie (2010) and Maree (2007) as the total group of people who are to be researched and generalised. Another definition is offered by Creswell (2014), Babbie (2009), and Babbie (2010), namely that a population in terms of a research study constitutes a group of people that researchers identify based on their interest and from which they wish to draw conclusions.

The population for this study consists of all social workers who render social work support services in shelters accommodating abused women in the Tshwane and Johannesburg regions, Gauteng Province.

The researcher selected Gauteng Province for the population of the study as this province has more shelters than any other, and because of its accessibility. Many shelters have long been established to provide social services to the abused women and have more than five years' experience in this field. The researcher is aware that the population of the study does involve a variety of different practitioners such as the managers which could be from different professions or occupations, social workers, social auxiliary workers, and volunteers who render social support services to abused women.

For the purpose of the study, the researcher involved only social workers as service providers since they are the main role players in rendering social support services to abused women. The social workers were selected from the 12 shelters in the Tshwane and Johannesburg regions. Gauteng Province comprises six shelters from the Johannesburg region and six shelters from the Tshwane region. The selection of these shelters was based on their proximity and accessibility. The researcher is working in Pretoria, Tshwane and resides in Soweto, Johannesburg.

1.8.1.2 Sampling

A sample represents a small part of the population that the researcher is interested in researching (Neuman, 2005). According to Babbie and Mouton (2010), a sample constitutes a group of individuals, randomly chosen or identified, from a larger population to participate in a specific study. According to Holloway and Wheeler (2010), sampling entails intentionally choosing an element from the whole population to learn more on the phenomenon that is being studied. Due to monetary and time constraints in conducting this research, a sample was drawn.

The researcher's intention was to focus on individuals who have maintained at least three years of sobriety. She was informed by the literature she consulted which pointed to the probability of continued sobriety increasing after three years' of abstinence, and that longer periods of abstinence are associated with a higher likelihood of continued abstention (Brecht, 2012; Evans, 2012). The shelters examined in this study have been in existence for more than five years, and most of the social workers who work in these shelters have more than three years' experience in this field.

1.8.1.3 Sampling methods

There are two main procedures or techniques that can be used in sampling, namely non-probability sampling and probability sampling, and they each have specific approaches or strategies. Probability sampling is derived from using random selection, meaning that the chance of being selected is unknown. Types of probability sampling include simple random sampling, systematic sampling, and cluster and stratified random sampling (Babbie, 2010). Non-probability sampling is the opposite of probability sampling designs, where a list of potential participants does not exist and each unit in a population has an equal chance of being selected. Types of non-probability sampling include purposive sampling, snowball sampling, quota sampling, and convenience sampling (Creswell, 2009).

For the purpose of this study, the researcher used purposive sampling. Firstly, she selected unique cases that could provide specific and relevant information.

Secondly, it was appropriate in cases where some members of the population were difficult to contact, or were specialised (Babbie, 2010; 2009). Purposive sampling enabled the researcher to judge who would best present the best information about the phenomenon under study in order to meet its objectives.

The following criteria for inclusion were employed for social workers as service providers to abused women in shelters:

- Social workers who offered social support services to abused women in shelters at the time of the interviews had to be from the Tshwane and Johannesburg regions. The close proximity and accessibility of these regions/districts enabled the researcher to spend more time on conducting the interviews.
- Social workers who had working experience of three years and more in these shelters since they had a better background on the challenges and effectiveness of social support services rendered to abused women in shelters.
- Social workers who were able to converse in English, Sotho, and Zulu – since the researcher is familiar with these languages – and who were South African citizens, and familiar with the mandate pertaining to shelters for abused women.
- Social workers who were registered as social workers under the Social Service Professions Act (Act 110 of 1978).
- Social workers who were willing and available to participate in the interviews.

1.9 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

The detailed application of this section will be discussed in Chapter 2.

Data collection is a systematic way of gathering information that is relevant to the research purpose (Burns & Grove, 2013). Observation is another way of data

collection that researchers use to explore and understand the group or culture being studied (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010).

The researcher collected data and assembled the raw information from the field (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) which connected with the experiences and perceptions she observed during the process of data gathering. However, there could be other processes involved owing to the nature of the study.

Since the study was qualitative in nature, the researcher carried out an action-reflection-planning process. She researcher collected data from social workers by means of semi-structured interviews with the aid of an interview guide. According to Creswell (2014) and Babbie (2009), semi-structured interviews are commonly used in qualitative research studies. Based on a pre-defined set of broad questions and themes, the interviewer conducts the interview in a way similar to that in which a skilled practitioner interviews a client in clinical practice, adhering to a recognisable plan but allowing for deviations where the interviewee decides to divulge new information. Semi-structured interviews do not assume that the researcher anticipates a sufficient number of answers to pre-format the questions (this would be positivistic), nor does it allow the interview to navigate aimlessly through any topic the interviewee cares to raise (Babbie, 2009; 2007).

The researcher explained the criteria for inclusion in the study, and assured social workers that their participation was voluntary and that their rights would not be jeopardised. The researcher gave the participants the opportunity to share their experiences about their challenges in offering social support service to abused women in shelters. All participants in the study were asked the same questions in accordance with the interview guide. The researcher also observed their non-verbal manner of communication.

1.9.1 Preparation for data collection

In this section the researcher discusses aspects of data collection and methods that were employed.

The Head of Department at the Department of Social Development and the social workers at the shelters were seen as the “gatekeepers” regulating the researcher’s access to the participants. A gatekeeper is defined by Creswell (2010; 2013) as a person who grants researchers access to the setting. In preparation for data collection the researcher wrote letters to the Head of the Department of Social Development in Gauteng Province and the Gauteng Shelter Forum, informing them of the study and its purpose and requested permission to conduct interviews with the sampled individuals at the shelters (Addendum 4). The researcher wrote to the individual participants and requested their voluntary participation. She informed them of the purpose of the study and the value that the research results would have in the field of the social sciences, in particular the challenges experienced by abused women in shelters (Addendum 1).

According to Neuman (2005), before embarking on a study qualitative researchers should self-assess and reflect on their position in society. In other words, qualitative researchers should acknowledge their experience, knowledge, position, and their contributions to society. In preparing participants for data collection, the researcher must be cognisant of her on-going relationship with participants, and how this might influence the outcome of a study (Haynes, 2012). The researcher needed to be aware of her possible influence on the data-collection process by examining her relationship with the participants, and how the dynamics of this relationship can affect responses to her questions. The researcher had to reflect on, amongst others, the methodological aspects of her research, her actions in conducting the interviews, and observation of the participants. The researcher had to self-reflect in order to be cognisant of her own biases, differing views, experiences in the victim empowerment field, responses to the questions, and her position in society.

Once a researcher has made the decision to undertake field research, he/she will have to identify him-/herself to the participants first and foremost as a researcher (Babbie, 2009). Franklin (2012) and Creswell (2010; 2009) state that the researcher must inform participants beforehand, either in person or through letters or emails, about when and where interviews will be conducted. The researcher should

preferably communicate with participants in person, or through emails, although the latter method is not without its difficulties.

The researcher visited the participants in person to inform them of the study, and requested them to complete the consent form should they agree to participate in the study. This put participants at ease and to feel less threatened by the position of the researcher (Addendum 2). The researcher requested the sampled shelters to make documents available that could provide a more detailed background of the shelters and the services rendered such as policies, their constitution, guidelines, and other relevant records (Addendum 5). The researcher also drafted a consent form intended for volunteers who would be willing to participate in providing debriefing to research participants (Addendum 3). The letters outlined dates, venues, and times for the interviews. The purpose and the criteria for inclusion in the research were explained to the participants.

The researcher further explained the envisaged use of the results and their dissemination. With regard to ethical issues, the participants were assured of confidentiality and were presented with the consent forms asking for permission to participate in the study. The researcher referred the participants to the identified social worker for debriefing as the need dictate. The researcher used open-ended questions for data collection to allow the participants to elaborate on the questions asked. Through these interviews the researcher hoped to garner an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. The individual interviews with social workers ranged from 45 minutes to more than an hour to facilitate optimum data collection.

Creswell (2014) refers to data collection as a series of interrelated activities, considered good information to answer emerging research questions. The principal methods of obtaining qualitative data are research interviews and group discussions. Data can be collected through structured or semi-structured and in-depth interviews. The researcher collected data through semi-structured interviews that were conducted with the participants who volunteered, who gave informed consent to participate in the study (Neuman, 2005).

The researcher conducted the semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions. In this research endeavour, semi-structured interviews as a form of qualitative research was used which allowed the researcher to gain insight into the perceptions, beliefs, and experiences of the participants about a particular research topic or concern (Babbie, 2009; Neuman, 2006).

The following requests and open-ended questions were formulated as stipulated in the interview guide, corresponding to the overall goal and objectives of the study, to obtain data from the social workers as service providers for abused women in shelters:

- Tell me more about your experiences in offering social support services to abused women in shelters.
- Share with me the kind of social support services you offer in these shelters.
- Tell me about the challenges that you experience in offering these social support services to abused women.
- In your opinion, what suggestions or recommendations would you offer to improve the social support services rendered to the women accommodated in shelters?

In collecting data, the researcher read documents relating to the selected shelters, their constitutions, policies, reports, newsletters, and guidelines to understand the role and responsibility of the shelter and how do shelters operates, what achievements and challenges they experience in the process of rendering services to abuse women and what are their highlights and best practices. Creswell (2014) argues that a researcher may collect qualitative documents, which may be public documents such as official reports, minutes of meetings, newspapers; or personal documents such as diaries, personal journals, letters, and emails. In a historical study of ethnic diversity a researcher conducts data collection from official documents, journals, review reports, newspapers, and other valuable historical documents (Babbie, 2010; 2009). These enabled the researcher to capture the

language and words of participants and allowed the data to be accessed at a time convenient to the researcher. This is called the unobtrusive source of information.

The researcher used probing as an interviewing skill in order to gather more detailed information. Paraphrasing, clarification, and summarising are some of the interviewing skills that can be applied during the interview process. These interviewing skills assisted the researcher in collecting more data and obtain details of what the interviewees articulated. This helped to clarify perceptions and misinterpretation, and enabled the researcher and the participants to come to a common understanding of the responses to the questions in relation to context and content.

1.9.2 The role of the researcher

The researcher negotiated with the “gatekeepers” at the Department of Social Development and the respective shelters (Addendum 4 & 5). The researcher also took into consideration the rights of the participants and ethical issues when conducting the study. The researcher sought to use the following interviewing skills to collect data from the social workers, as outlined by Creswell (2009) and Babbie (2007).

- Creating an enabling environment: Due to the different role that the researcher played, she created an atmosphere of trust and built a rapport with participants to lessen interpersonal anxiety and make participants feel comfortable and speak openly about their experiences in rendering social support services to abused women. The researcher informed the participants as to the procedure to be followed during and at the times set for the interviews.
- Asking relevant questions: The researcher asked relevant questions as informed by the interview guide. She asked open-ended questions that were brief and easy to understand.

- Empathy: the participants were encouraged to tell their experiences from their own frame of reference; they were assured that the interviewer would not be judgemental in any way.
- Attending and listening: The researcher listened attentively to the words of the participants, and paid attention to their non-verbal and verbal communication in order to understand their experiential world.

1.9.3 Pilot testing

According to Wallimans (2011) and Bless and Higson-Smith (2005), pilot testing is defined as a pre-test of a questionnaire or other type of survey on a small number of cases in order to test the procedures and quality of responses. Kumar (2011) describes pre-testing as involving and selecting a few interview schedules and actually coding the responses to ascertain any problems in the coding process. Pilot testing in qualitative research is usually informal and involves a few participants who possess the same characteristics as those who participate in the main study. Pilot testing focuses on the specific areas that may have been previously unclear, or to test certain questions (Creswell, 2014; 2009).

In relation to this research, the researcher identified two social workers as participants to pilot-test the interviewing process and the questions, and she travelled to these participants in the selected shelters. In testing the questions during the trial run of this data-collection method, the researcher was able to make modifications with a view to improving the quality of the interviewing process which would take place during the main inquiry (Neuman, 2009).

In this instance the researcher had the opportunity to establish rapport with the participants, as voluntary engagement with and informed consent from both the participants and the shelters were critical. She conducted the pilot testing to assess her interviewing skills and the estimated duration of an interview. The interviews were conducted at the shelters where the participants would feel more comfortable and relaxed. It was conducted in a safe, protected, and private environment to avoid disruptions. The researcher assessed her skills in conducting a research

interview with the aim of collecting information. The two social workers who participated in the pilot testing were excluded from the final sample.

Following the pilot testing, adjustments were made to the questions in the interview guide by rephrasing them and adding or deleting questions where necessary, depending on the feedback received from the two interviews. Reworking the interview guide ensured that the questions were correctly formulated and understood, and sufficiently clear to facilitate optimum data collection.

1.9.4 Methods of data analysis

A discussion about methods in qualitative research specifies the steps in analysing the various forms of qualitative data. This involves segmenting, dividing, and collating the data. Creswell (2014) and Babbie (2009) define methods of analysis as methods of examining social research data without converting them into numerical format. Kumar (2011) and Neuman (2009) claim that the researcher has to describe the strategy for analysing data. Data analysis assists in bringing order, structure, and meaning to the data collected. Qualitative data analyses search for general statements about relationships amongst categories of data and for building grounded theory.

The interviews were audio recorded digitally, translated into English, and transcribed verbatim. Upon completion, the researcher reviewed all the transcripts to assess whether the data made sense, and made notes of ideas as they came to mind. The data were divided into smaller themes in preparation for analysis. All the data collected were recorded through note taking, audio recording, and recording the information on computer in accordance with the developed themes. The coding process assisted the researcher in generating a description of the setting or people as well as the categories or themes for analysis. The researcher used content analysis to analyse the data. According to Maree (2010) content analysis is a systematic approach to qualitative data analysis that identifies and summarises content.

Over and above, she used the following eight steps for qualitative data analysis as stated by Tesch (cited in Creswell, 2009):

- The researcher read all the transcripts.
- The researcher then studied the documents and made notes on all the implied messages and the themes that were identified.
- When the task had been completed, the researcher made a list of all the topics and clustered them together with similar topics; clusters could possibly be major and/or unique topics. The process assisted the researcher in categorising the topics.
- The researcher assigned a code name to each topic. The transcripts were revisited and codes were placed in relevant places.
- The researcher used more descriptive wording for the topics and turned them into categories; she then looked for ways of reducing the total list of categories, by grouping together the topics related to one another.
- The researcher made final decisions on what the abbreviation for each category would be.
- The researcher assembled data material belonging to each theme or category in one place, and performed a preliminary analysis.
- After the researcher had completed all these steps, the data were recorded and saved on a computer.

In the following section the researcher discusses how data were verified to ensure the competency of the research.

1.9.5 Methods of data verification

Babbie (2009) and McBride (2012) define data verification as a process where different types of data are checked for accuracy and inconsistencies after data migration had taken place. This helps to determine whether data were accurately translated when transferred from one source to another, whether the data were complete, and support processes reflected in the new system. Once the data had

been broken down into meaningful themes, conceptualised, and collated the researcher conducted data reduction by means of written field notes or transcripts to eliminate any discrepancies. According to Kumar (2011), once the data have been coded a few research instruments are selected at random and the responses to identify the discrepancies are coded and recorded. Kumar states that in order to verify data the researcher should continue coding until he/she is confident that there are no discrepancies.

Trustworthiness needs to be established in the study in order to validate the research findings and conclusions. Guba proposes four criteria that should be considered by researchers in pursuit of a trustworthy study: truth-value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality (Kumar, 2008; Silverman, 2001). In this study, Lincoln and Guba's model (in Kumar, 2008; Shenton, 2004; Rolfe, 2004; Krefting, 2003) of ensuring the trustworthiness of qualitative data was applied in relation to the following five aspects to ensure trustworthiness:

1.9.5.1 Truth value

According to Babbie (2009) and Creswell (2009), truth value is one of the aspects in which the researcher has confidence as to how well the data and processes of analysis address the intended outcome. This aspect assesses the credibility of the researcher with regard to the research results. Krefting (2003) and Rolfe (2004) argue that truth value is concerned with whether the findings of the study are a true reflection of the experiences of the study participants. Truth value refers to data which are rich and representative of participants' knowledge.

Both Creswell (2014) and Rolfe (2004) describe triangulation as the comparison of multiple perspectives by using different methods of data collection. Different data sources of information are triangulated by examining evidence from the sources and using it to build coherent justification of the themes. If themes are established based on converging several sources of data or perspectives from participants, then this process can add value to the validity of the study (Krefting, 2003). The researcher observed the participants during the interviews to ensure that what was said was also confirmed by non-verbal cues. In an effort to further enhance the

credibility of the study, the researcher sought the opinion of the colleagues and co-workers.

1.9.5.2 Applicability

According to Kumar (2011) and Krefting (2003), applicability is described as the degree to which the findings can be applied to other contexts, settings, or groups. Applicability is established through a strategy of transferability. In order to achieve transferability, the researcher must provide a dense description of the research methodology employed, and how the research methodology is proven suitable to be applied in other related contexts that were not part of the study (Rolfe, 2004). The researcher assessed the usefulness of the collected data which could contribute to the development of knowledge with regard to social service interventions. The findings of the research will be presented to the participants in shelters across Gauteng.

1.9.5.3 Consistency

Creswell (2009) and Rolfe (2004) define consistency of data as findings that would be consistent if the enquiry were replicated with the same subjects or in a similar context. Consistency is established through a strategy of dependability and will be achieved by using an independent coder (Creswell, 2011). The researcher and the independent coder independently coded the data and subsequently conducted consensus discussions with the study leader on the themes, subthemes, and categories to be presented in the research findings.

1.9.5.4 Neutrality

Neutrality refers to the extent to which the study findings are free from bias and are separated from the researcher's perspectives, background, position, or conditioning circumstances (Creswell, 2014). Guba (in Krefting, 2003) emphasises that neutrality in qualitative research should consider the neutrality of the data rather than that of the researcher, which suggests confirmability as the strategy to achieve neutrality. Neutrality was established through triangulation which continually verifies the consistency of findings generated by different data-collection methods. The

researcher took notes throughout the interviews in order to later substantiate the information garnered from the participants during the analysis process.

1.9.5.5 Peer examination

The researcher sought input from colleagues who were well-versed in qualitative research and who clarified the study by asking pertinent questions, generally shedding light on aspects not quite clear and making suggestions. Creswell (2011), Krefting (2003), and Rolfe (2004) find this method suitable. The researcher also has an expert qualitative researcher as a study leader. In this study the researcher acknowledged the role of the study leader as a peer examiner. The study leader did not interfere with the collected data or compromise or influence the integrity of the data collected with her personal perceptions, interests, and preferences.

1.9.5.6 Reflexivity

Reflexivity means that a researcher must be cognisant of the state of his/her ongoing relationships with participants and how this might influence the outcome of a study (Haynes, 2012). Symon and Cassel (2012) define reflexivity as an awareness of the researcher's role in the practice of research and the way this is influenced by the object of the research, enabling the researcher to acknowledge the way in which he or she affects both research process and outcome. According to Haynes (2012), reflexivity allows for a form of conversation through which we come to know ourselves and others. It gives the researcher an opportunity to understand the position from which they speak and the political and social context in which these conversations take place. It is the process of examining both oneself as researcher, and the research relationship. Self-searching involves examining one's conceptual baggage, assumptions, and preconceptions and how these affect research decisions, particularly the selection and wording of questions (Neuman, 2011).

In the this study the researcher had to assume an objective position since she was working directly with the service providers, such as social workers, that provide social support services to the abused women. The researcher had to understand

clearly the influence her role as a manager in the Department of Social Development would have during the data-collection process as well as data analysis, throughout the entire research process. The researcher reflected on the nature of her involvement in the research process and the way this would shape its outcome. Reflexivity was applied throughout the research process, for instance the researcher being aware of how her assumptions around the phenomenon under investigation could influence the data collection and the findings, and whether her suppositions might cause participants to feel threatened. This enabled her to separate her role as researcher and manager of the social support services offered to abused women.

1.9.5.7 Authority of the researcher

According to Creswell (2014; 2009), the authority of the researcher refers to the researcher's knowledge and level of experience in working in the field of the phenomenon under study. The researcher is a social worker who is working with the shelters that provide care, support, and protection to the victims of crime and violence. She provides training and capacity building to the shelter service providers on the Victim Empowerment Programme and Governance. She facilitated the process of development of the National Strategy for Sheltering Services in the years 2012 to 2013, which was instrumental in shaping the services and programmes offered to victims. The researcher has worked at an NGO and has rendered services and advocated for the rights of the victims of crime and violence. She has also worked at the Gauteng provincial office of the Department of Social Development where her mandate was to develop policies and guidelines and to provide monitoring and evaluation services to the NGOs who provide shelter services within the victim empowerment services. For the purpose of this study, the researcher will have undergone the process of self-reflection and awareness of her authority and knowledge that she has with regard to the topic at hand. The researcher has been objective by being honest and ethically mature throughout the research process.

The following section discusses the ethical considerations undertaken during the study:

1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Creswell (2014; 2009) and Babbie (2009), ethics is defined as a set of moral principles that are suggested by an individual or group, are subsequently widely accepted, and offer rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and participants, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants, and students. Neuman (2005) also encourages researchers to be sensitive to cultural and political issues of different cultural interactions; researchers need to learn what participants in different cultures consider offensive.

The following ethical considerations were taken into account:

1.10.1 Informed consent

According to Franklin (2012) and Babbie (2009), informed consent means that permission is granted by the potential respondent to the researcher to access, observe and/or participate, and then use the material in the research. Wallimans (2011) states that the consent given by participants to participate in a research project should be based on their having sufficient information about the purposes and nature of the research and the involvement required of them. In addition, Kumar (2011) advocates that participants should adequately and accurately be made aware of the type of information the researcher requires of them, why the information is needed, what the purpose of the research is, how the participants are expected to participate in the study, and how the study will affect them directly or indirectly. Consent should be given voluntarily by the participants and there should not be any pressure exerted on them.

The researcher was granted ethical approval for the study by the Departmental Research and Ethics Committee from the University of South Africa (Addendum 9). The researcher considered all ethical aspects and drafted a consent form to be completed by the participants voluntarily and not through coercion. The form

provided information as to the purpose of the study, its duration, what their role in the study would entail, what would happen to the research results, and how the participants would benefit from the study (Babbie, 2009). The researcher sent an explanatory letter (Addendum 4) to the Gauteng Department of Social Development requesting their voluntary participation in the study (Addendum 1).

1.10.2 Confidentiality

Guthrie (2010) and Maree (2007) point out that the promise of privacy would encourage people to decide how much information about their lives they would reveal to the researcher. Researchers are obliged not to reveal information about participants in any way that might allow them to be identified. The authors further emphasise that interview notes and completed questionnaires should not display the actual names of the interviewees. While Kumar (2011) asserts that the researcher needs to ensure that after the information has been collected, its source cannot be traced and identified. The authors argue that it is unethical to identify an individual respondent and the information provided. The researcher has to keep the information and the participants anonymous. According to Babbie (2009), confidentiality signifies a guarantee of privacy and non-disclosure of all information. The researcher drafted a confidentiality clause in the consent form explaining to the participants the aspects of confidentiality and the envisaged duration of each interview. The researcher assured the participants formally through a letter and by signing the confidentiality forms that their personal details would be kept in a locked cabinet at her home, and that none of the information would be made available to other people or the public. They were also informed that the research results and report would be handed over to the supervisor for supervision purposes. The researcher established a relationship with the participants based on trust throughout the research process. She kept the participants' records anonymous by the use of coding, and by using the letters of the alphabet.

1.10.3 Compensation

As noted by Kumar (2011) and Maree (2007), it is unethical to provide monetary or other incentives to persuade participants to share information with a researcher or inquirer. The authors' point out that some researchers give incentives before data collection, but that this is unethical. In most cases participants do not participate in the study because of incentives, but because they realise the importance of the study. Babbie (2010; 2009), on the other hand, argues that compensation can be in different forms rather than cash, but it can include gift certificates, contributions to charities, and other methods of payment. In addition, Creswell (2014; 2010) emphasises that the researcher must avoid exploitation of the participants. The researcher thanked all the social workers who participated in the study in writing as a means of appreciation for their contribution and willingness to participate. The researcher was conscious and mindful of the influence she might have had during this process as well as her position in this respect. The researcher had to adapt to the role of researcher rather than that of an employee in a government department.

1.10.4 Debriefing of participants

Debriefing is the process of interviewing subjects to learn about their experience of participating in the project; this is very important, especially if they have been harmed in any way due to that participation (Babbie, 2010). Kumar (2011) states that the researcher has to ensure that the involvement of participants does not cause harm and in the event that it does, the researcher has to ensure that the risk is minimal and where necessary, provide intervention or counselling. Creswell (2014) argues that the researcher needs to anticipate the possibility of harmful, intimate information being disclosed during the data-collection process. It is difficult to anticipate and plan for the impact shared information might have during or after an interview.

The researcher conducted debriefing immediately after each interview and then referred participants to an identified social worker for further debriefing, when the need arose. This was a critical aspect of the study since the participants were social workers (Addendum 3) who offered social support services to abused women in

shelters who have suffered harm; there was, and always is, a possibility that research questions and the process of disclosing information during data collection could resurrect memories of the experience of victimisation suffered by the abused women, and these could also negatively affected the social worker.

1.10.5 Management of information

According to Creswell (2009; 2014) and Kumar (2011), the management of information is the collection and management of information from one or more sources; and the distribution of that information to one or more audiences. This sometimes involves those who have a stake in, or a right to, that information. Management means organisation of and control over the structure, processing, and delivery of information. In the proposed research study, the researcher ensured that the process of data collection was done in a proper and ethical way. Once the information had been collected it was coded and kept strictly confidential. The audiotapes were coded to disguise any identifying information. These tapes were stored in a locked office in a locked steel cabinet, to which only the researcher has access. The transcripts (without any identifying information) were made available to the research supervisor, a translator after being transcribed in English, and an independent coder with the sole purpose of assisting and guiding the researcher with this research undertaking. Once the research has been completed and the report approved, the audiotapes and other confidential information would be destroyed.

Further details on the ethical considerations are discussed in Chapter 2.

In the following section, the researcher provides clarification on the key concepts that were used in the study.

1.11 CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

According to James (2012) and Guthrie (2010), the clarification of key concepts is a process that seeks to define and explain these concepts to the reader. Clarification of concepts is defined by Babbie (2013) as the important terms which reinforce the student's acquisition of the necessary vocabulary. Neuman (2005) states that it is

imperative that researchers employ definitions they obtained from a relevant and reliable source. The following are definitions of a number of key concepts used in this study.

1.11.1 Abuse

The UN Handbook for Legislation on Violence against Women (2010) defines abuse as any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women; including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private. On the other hand, the Centre for Research and Education on Violence against Women (2016) defines abuse as a single act, but adds that most often it occurs in a context where there is a pattern of assaultive and controlling behaviour. There may be a number of acts which appear minor when viewed in isolation, but collectively form a pattern that amounts to abuse (Vetten, 2005). Typically, abuse escalates in frequency and/or severity. Once an abuser resorts to physical violence, he is likely to intensify his assaults and increase the woman's risk of harm and serious life-threatening injury (Rasool, 2012).

For the purpose of this study, abuse means the range or forms of ill-treatment suffered by women accommodated in shelters where they receive social support services, and this includes physical, emotional, sexual, psychological, and other controlling behaviours.

1.11.2 Experience

According to Walliman (2011), experience is the actual observation of or practical acquaintance with facts or events that result in knowledge and understanding. The Oxford Dictionary (2016) defines experience as practical knowledge, skill, or practice derived from direct observation of or participation in events or a particular activity. An experience can be defined as an event which leaves an impression on a person (Soanes, Spooner & Hawker, 2001).

For the purpose of this study, experience means the practical knowledge, skills, and understanding of social workers who provide social services support to abused women for an often prolonged period within these shelters.

1.11.3 Social support services

The Department of Correctional Service (2016) defines the core function of social support services as being able to assess the offenders and provide needs-based programmes and services in order to enhance the adjustment, social functioning, and the reintegration of offenders into the community. According to the Department of Social Development Strategic Planning Document (2014/2015), social support services include programmes and services provided for the protection of women from violence and abuse such as prevention and awareness campaigns and counselling.

Dangor et al. (2000) and Vetten (2005) state that the goal of these shelters is to provide social support services as a comprehensive service to abused women, but due to limited financial and human resources that is not effectively achieved. These social support services include counselling and advocacy for victims of abuse; family and caregiver support programmes; alternative living arrangements, including out-of-home placement for children, community protective programmes for abused elders, and shelters for abused women; educational programmes for those at risk of abusing or being abused (Patel et al., 2012).

For the purpose of this study, social support services means psychosocial services such as trauma counselling and debriefing; group work; educational and information sharing; and skills development provided by social workers to the women accommodated in these shelters, for a period of three to six months.

According to Thoits (in Dykstra 2015), social support services refers to positive exchanges with network members that help people stay healthy or cope with adverse events. Researchers typically distinguish the following types of supportive behavior: instrumental aid, the expression of emotional caring or concern, and the provision of advice and guidance. Social support is a powerful predictor of living a

healthy and long life. On the other hand Seeman (2008) argue that social support refers to the various types of support (i.e., assistance/help) that people receive from others and is generally classified into two (sometimes three) major categories: emotional, instrumental (and sometimes informational) support. Large, well-controlled prospective studies show that social support has an impact on older adults' health independently of potentially confounded factors such as socioeconomic status, health-risk behaviors, use of health services, and personality. Social support helps people cope with setbacks and serves as a protective barrier against threats to well-being. Social support helps people cope with setbacks and serves as a protective barrier against threats to well-being (Dykstra, 2015).

1.11.4 Social worker

A social worker is a change agent who is skilled at working with individuals, groups, families, organisations, and communities (Zastrow, 2010). Section 17 of the Social Service Profession Act (Act 110 of 1978) defines a social worker as any person who holds the prescribed qualifications and satisfies the prescribed conditions, and who satisfies the South African Council of Social Service Professions that he/she is a fit and proper person to be allowed to practise the profession of social work. Mhango (2012) defines social workers as professionals who are expected to liberate the victims of abuse by raising their consciousness to the true source of their problems. Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promote social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people.

The researcher adopted the definition as prescribed by Rasool (2012) who defines social workers as professional service providers who render social support services in shelters. Members of the community seldom have contact with these abused women, and are not aware of the social services rendered to these victims of abuse. The Department of Social Development's Annual Report (2013/2014) defines a social worker as a professional person, registered with the South African Council of Social Service Professions, rendering service to the vulnerable and poor

communities with the aim of promoting self-actualisation and self-determination in accordance with section 17 of the Social Service Professions Act (Act 110 of 1978) as amended.

1.11.5 Women

The National Policy Guideline for Victim Empowerment (2009) defines women as one of the vulnerable groups that are targets of sexual or other assault, who face many obstacles in their quest for justice. According to the Oxford Dictionary (2016), a woman is a human adult female person associated with a particular place, activity, or occupation. Dangor et al. (2000) describe the women accommodated in shelters as adults over the age of 18 years, who have experienced domestic violence in an intimate partner relationship.

For the purpose of this study, a woman is referred to as an adult female who has been exposed to harm such as beatings, verbal insults, threats, sexual assault, and is vulnerable to abuse; and who has access to social support services in the shelters.

1.11.6 Women abuse

According to the Stop Violence Against Women (2017), women abuse is defined as any use of psychological, physical or sexual force, actual or threatened, in an intimate relationship. Intimate relationships include a current or former spouse, and an intimate, or dating partner. Violence is used to intimidate, humiliate or frighten victims, or to make them feel powerless. Woman abuse is not usually limited to one act. It is a pattern of behaviour, involving a number of tactics. When it happens in an intimate relationship, the abuse usually follows a pattern and gets more serious over time (Dangor et al. 2000).

1.12 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

1.12.1 Theoretical significance

It has been argued that there is a lack of research-based knowledge on the social support services rendered by social workers to abused women and insufficient,

accurate information exists on the social work support services offered to these abused women in shelters (Feder & Wilson, 2005). This research takes a strong stance on the importance of social support services rendered to abused women in shelters within the spectrum of the social welfare intervention process. This study contributes to the expansion of the existing knowledge base and its effectiveness, and augments the theoretical perspective on the social support services that are rendered to abused women by social workers in the shelters.

1.12.2 Policy significance

The environment within which social welfare services are rendered has changed during the past 15 years. The change has been brought about largely by changes in the socioeconomic and political situation in South Africa, which necessitated legislative and policy reviews to make social welfare programmes and services responsive to the needs of the poorest of the poor, the marginalised, and the most vulnerable groups in society (Department of Social Development Framework for Social Welfare Services, 2013). This research further assists with the development of policy guidelines, and government and NGOs' policy alignment on programmes and services and how these should be offered in a continuum of care to benefit the women in shelters.

This study also recommends that various government departments play a significantly active role in the lives and protection of abused women by advocating for their development and empowerment; and making provision for financial and infrastructural resources. The social workers who offer these services to abused women have the opportunity to share their understanding of the role these services play in the lives of these women. This study advocates a policy review on the social support services rendered by shelters by adding the voice of social workers as service providers to the abused women in these shelters.

1.12.3 Practice significance

The findings of the research contribute towards fine-tuning the social support services to the benefit of abused women. This research highlights the importance of

other role players in the provision of social support services, and to ensure a multidisciplinary approach within the sheltering services. It enables social workers to understand the importance of the work that they do in contributing to the lifespan of these women; and understanding the role and effect of the social support services in changing the lives of these women and their families. The study contributes to the development of early intervention and prevention services to reduce the scourge of violence against women. The study also emphasises the importance of training and capacity building for all social service professionals who work within the shelter system to improve the quality of services and to promote teamwork within and outside the shelter system. This study also advocates for the development of standardised intervention and aftercare programmes for effective service delivery to abused women in shelters.

1.13 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Limitations are occurrences that arise in a study which are beyond the researcher's control (Strydom, 2011). The following are limitations noted by the researcher during the course of the research process:

- The research was conducted with only a small sample of the population, limited to 12 female social workers. The sample lent a biased perception because mainly female social workers were available to participate in the study. The sample's gender composition corresponded with that of social work professionals in South Africa as most professional social workers are female.
- It was difficult for the researcher to obtain permission from social workers because of their busy work schedule. However, she persistently contacted these social workers to negotiate suitable dates, and once agreed upon, urged them to include the interview dates in their diaries. She also confirmed their participation in writing as a reminder and to avoid any misunderstanding or inconvenience.

- Some participants might have withheld important information due to the researcher's position as Deputy Director. Role clarification was very important in this regard. At the beginning of the interview the researcher clarified her role as that of the researcher, not the Deputy Director in the Department. She also applied reflexivity throughout the interviews, and was mindful that her position could have an influence on the responses of the participants. She asked open-ended questions that did not restrict their responses. In some interviews, participants raised questions as to the role of the department where the researcher was employed. The researcher explained and clarified her role as a researcher and not a government official or employee. The participants were able to speak freely and tell their stories without any fear or doubt.
- One participant indicated that she did not want the interview to be recorded as she did not trust recording devices. The researcher scheduled a special meeting with this participant to clarify the purpose of the tape recorder.
- The researcher experienced challenges in collecting data due to the Department of Social Development strike. Furthermore, the preparation for the research interviews was delayed due to the protest march of social workers and NEHAWU union members that took place on 12 March 2017, which made it difficult for her to access the shelters and the social workers because their offices were closed. The researcher had to reschedule the appointments which made it difficult to access the participants due to other commitments.
- During the preparation for the interviews, two shelters reported that their social workers have less than the three years' working experience required by the selection criteria. Consultations took place when the participants and their supervisors were included in the study, since the participants had first-hand knowledge with regard to social support services rendered to abused women.

1.14 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

The research report is divided into the following four chapters:

Chapter 1 – Introduction and problem formulation

The chapter focuses on the introduction and the general orientation of the research study. The chapter presents the introduction, problem formulation, problem statement, motives for the study, research question, goal and objectives of the study, research approach and design, ethical considerations, clarification of key concepts, and the content plan of the research report.

Chapter 2 – Application of the research methodology

This chapter focuses on the researcher's description and application of the qualitative research process.

Chapter 3 – Research findings

This chapter concentrates on the research findings. The themes that emerged from the interviews are presented, discussed, compared, and constructed within the existing literature relevant to women as victims of crime and violence in relation to social development and strength based theories.

Chapter 4 – Summary, conclusion, and recommendations

This chapter presents a summary of the key findings, an outline of the overall study, its limitations, and it evaluates whether the study has answered the main research question and achieved the research aim. Conclusions are drawn and recommendations for further research are discussed.

1.15 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

Chapter 1 provides the background and orientation to the research study undertaken on the social support services for abused women: perspectives of social workers. It outlines the challenges which social workers who provide social support services are faced with in the provision of these services. It outlines the formulation

of the problem. The chapter provides an account of the background introduction, justification or rationale for the study, research problem, research questions, goal and objectives, research methodology, key concepts, and the content plan of the research report.

Chapter 2 addresses the research methodology and how it applies to the study.

CHAPTER 2

APPLICATION OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the research method utilised in this study. It also outlines how the qualitative research method was employed in order to explore, describe, and contextualise the social support services for abused women in shelters in Gauteng Province, from the perspectives of social workers. This chapter discusses the problem formulation, motivation for the research study, theoretical framework of the study, research question and goals, and the research methodology; it also gives a detailed account of the ethical principles applied in this research.

The research methodology used in the study is discussed in detail in the section below.

2.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to Creswell (2009), a research methodology comprises a rational group of methods that are equivalent to one another, and that have the reliability of delivering data and findings of a study. In this study the research methodology includes a description of the specific techniques employed (Strydom in De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2011) as well as the research method, research design, method of data gathering, and the type of data analysis utilised by the researcher (Silverman, 2011).

2.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

Franklin (2012) states that a research approach denotes the plans and procedures for the research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis. They involve the intersection of philosophical assumptions, designs, and specific methods (Carey, 2009).

This study was conducted within a qualitative research approach. This approach assisted the researcher in exploring and describing the experiences of social

workers who render social support services to abused women. According to Merriam (2002), qualitative research seeks to understand how people interpret their experiences, the manner in which they construct their worlds, and the meaning they attribute to their experiences. Qualitative research aims to unveil people's comprehension and perceptions about life and how they ascribe their conceptions to their daily lives, in their social environment, and in their interaction with others (Creswell, 2014).

In this study, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with the individual members of the selected sample. The advantage of this type of data-collection technique is that it focuses on the individual and promotes a culture of active participation by the interviewee. It enables the researcher to give a voice to the participants in the study, viz. social workers who offer social support services to abused women in shelters. This method has limitations, however, notably that participants could provide information filtered through their own personal views; they can provide information in a designated place rather than in a natural field setting, or the researcher's presence may bias or influence their responses; they could provide information that they think the researcher expects to hear, rather than the reality (Creswell, 2014).

In this study the researcher was able to interview social workers who offer social support services to abused women in shelters, Gauteng Province. The participants had the opportunity to participate and tell their stories with regard to their own understanding of social support services because they are involved in the day-to-day activities of these shelters. The researcher was able to listen to the stories from their point of view as social workers. The researcher acknowledged the issue of diversity and the political and social identities that many may ascribe to, and ensured that she reflected continuously on her own beliefs, values, and perceptions. This was achieved by the application of the non-judgemental attitude embraced by the researcher. She used the interview guide to direct her interview questions and used simple, clear, and understandable language during the interview process. The researcher tried to understand the respondents' definition of their world. This was done by reflecting, clarifying, and remaining objective.

2.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

In this study, a qualitative research approach was applied with the aim of exploring, describing, and contextualising the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2014). The researcher explored the magnitude of the problem and systematically explored and described the perspectives of social workers who render social support services to abused women in shelters (Maxwell, 2013).

The research techniques used for data collection are presented below.

2.4.1 Exploratory research design

Babbie (2009; 2010), and Burns and Grove (2010) claim that **exploratory research** occurs when a researcher examines a new interest or when the subject itself is relatively new. Exploratory studies are also a source of grounded theory. They are appropriate for more persistent phenomena as they are essential whenever a researcher is breaking new ground, and they always yield new insights into a topic of research.

Because little is known about the social support services rendered to abused women, this research study explored the social support services for abused women from the perspectives of social workers in shelters, Gauteng Province. An exploratory research design was employed to elicit information from 10 participants about the phenomenon under study. The researcher asked open-ended questions by using semi-structured interviews, based on an interview guide, to explore the experiences of social workers.

2.4.2 Descriptive research design

A **descriptive design** relies on observation as a means of collecting data. It attempts to examine situations in order to establish the norm (Wallimans, 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Description design maintains what can be predicted to reoccur under the same circumstances (Wallimans, 2011).

Tracy (2013), Bhattacharjee (2012), and Burns and Grove (2010) argue that descriptive research is directed at making careful observations and detailed

documentation of a phenomenon of interest. These observations must be based on scientific method (i.e., must be replicable, precise, etc.), which would render them more reliable than casual observations by untrained people. In addition, Kumar (2011) declares that descriptive research attempts to describe systematically a situation, problem, phenomenon, service or programme, or to provide information about the living conditions of a particular community.

Through this design, the researcher used semi-structured interviews to describe the social support services offered to the abused women in shelters. The participants described the experiences from their own frame of reference. Restrictive factors in the social support services and suggestions to overcome such impediments with a view to formulating practice guidelines are described in this study.

2.4.3 Contextualise research design

According to Monette, Sullivan, & DeJong (2008), contextual research assists a researcher in exploring and describing a research problem within the context in which the participants function, and thereby contribute to a better understanding. Neuman (2005) explains that contextual research design is used in a qualitative research study to understand the social meaning and significance of an event or social action from the social context in which it appears. Furthermore, Hennink et al. (2011) contend that contextual research design is used in a qualitative research study to understand the social meaning and significance of an event or social action, from the social context in which it appears.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher decided to employ a **contextual research design**. Babbie (2010), and Burns and Grove (2010) emphasise that when contextualising the research design, the phenomena are studied because of their intrinsic interest, and because contextual design aims to produce an extensive description of the phenomenon within the context of the unique setting of the domain of the phenomenon.

This study focuses only on the social workers involved in rendering social support services to abused women. Furthermore, shelters for abused women in the

Tshwane and Johannesburg regions in Gauteng Province formed part of the study. The participants were interviewed at their offices based at the shelters.

2.5 POPULATION, SAMPLING, AND SAMPLING METHODS

2.5.1 Research population

The study population, as specified by Holloway and Wheeler (2010), consisted of individuals to whom the researcher could gain access and who had the required knowledge and experience. A population entails a group of persons who have some homogenous characteristics and who are of interest to the researcher (Brink, 2003). A population refers to every individual who fits the criteria that a researcher has laid out for research participants (Strydom, 2005; Saumure & Given, 2008; Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2013).

The population for this study consisted of all social workers who render social work support services in shelters which accommodate abused women in Gauteng Province. Currently there are 88 funded shelters in South Africa. Gauteng Province has 30 shelters, and each shelter has one social worker who renders social support services to abused women. Of the 30 shelters, 26 are government funded while the remaining four are not. There are therefore 26 social workers employed in the 26 funded shelters for victims of crime and violence. Of the 26 funded shelters, 25 are run by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as service providers, while only one shelter is run by government. The Gauteng shelters are geographically spread throughout the province, and they are based in the five districts/regions: there are six shelters in Johannesburg; six in the West Rand; one in Sedibeng; six in Ekurhuleni; and six in Tshwane.

The researcher opted for Gauteng Province since it has more shelters than any other province, and because of its accessibility. The researcher was aware that the population of the study involved a variety of different practitioners such as managers who were from different professions or occupations, social workers, and social auxiliary workers. The researcher selected only social workers as service

providers since they are the main role players in rendering social support services to abused women.

2.5.2 Sampling

Sampling is a practical way of collecting data when the population is extremely large, thus making a study of all its elements difficult (Bless, Higson & Kagee, 2006). In addition, Guthrie (2010) and Babbie (2010) define sampling as one of the foundations of research methods and design because research design nearly always involves the utilisation of samples. Sampling has implications in dealing with the findings and the extent to which they can apply beyond the sample.

It was not possible to include the whole population in the study and therefore only a sample was drawn. It should be noted that the size of the sample cannot be determined beforehand and that the sample reaches its limit when the point of data saturation has been reached. The researcher knew that data saturation had been reached when the information she received from the participants became repetitive and when no new information came to light. Data saturation determines the size of the sample (Babbie, 2010). In relation to the research study, 10 participants were interviewed instead of the 12 who were identified for the study.

It became evident that data saturation had been reached after participants became repetitive in their responses, and the researcher realised that no new information would be forthcoming. In order to determine saturation, the researcher identified any gaps in the data by continuously analysing the data and deducing themes and subthemes concurrent with the data-collection process. The participants presented the same information although they were from different regions, which convinced the researcher that data saturation had been reached.

2.5.3 Sampling methods

Qualitative sampling is concerned with information richness, and therefore the sampling methods should be appropriate and adequate (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, Davidson, 2002). In qualitative studies non-probability sampling

methods are utilised, in particular purposive sampling techniques, when the research deals with a difficult-to-reach specialised population (De Vos et al., 2002).

The researcher used purposive sampling because firstly, she aimed to select unique cases that could provide specific information. Secondly, this method is appropriate in cases where the members of the population are specialised and difficult to contact (Babbie, 2010; 2009). In order to select the participants, the researcher applied the purposive sampling method, which enabled her to judge who would present the best information about the phenomenon in order to meet the objectives of the study.

The following criteria were employed for social workers as service providers for abused women in shelters:

- Social workers from the Tshwane and Johannesburg regions in Gauteng Province, who provide social support services to abused women in shelters, were selected. These regions/districts were accessible, and the researcher could therefore spend more time in conducting the interviews.
- The social workers who had working experience of three years and more in these shelters were deemed to have more practical experience in the challenges and effectiveness of social support services rendered to abused women in shelters. However, during the preparation for the interviews with these social workers, the researcher was informed by the managers of two of the identified shelters that their social workers only had working experience of two years and five months and two years and six months respectively, which is less than the three years required in accordance with the criteria for inclusion in the study.
- Social workers were able to converse in English, Tsonga, Tswana, Sotho Venda, and Zulu; the researcher is familiar with all these languages. They were all South African citizens and were familiar with the mandate pertaining to shelters for abused women. The interviews were conducted in English, and the social workers were comfortable with this arrangement.

- The social workers who formed part of the study were all registered as such under the Social Service Professions Act (Act 110 of 1978). Managers of these shelters or organisations are non-practising social workers who are not registered to practise as such. They were not included in the study.
- Most of the social workers who were approached were willing and available to be interviewed; however, some of the identified social workers refused to be part of the study.

In this section the researcher describes how the pilot test was conducted.

2.6 PILOT TESTING

Strydom (in De Vos et al., 2005) refers to a pilot study as a prerequisite for the successful execution and completion of a research project. Shuttleworth (2010) affirms that a pilot study is a scientific tool for “soft research” and a small-scale rehearsal of the larger research design. A pilot study is conducted in order to assess whether the relevant data can be obtained and also to provide the researcher with an opportunity to modify the questions in the interview guide (Strydom & Delport, 2005).

The researcher identified two social workers to participate in the pilot test. She wrote letters to the shelters and the participants informing them of the purpose of the study, and requested permission to conduct the interviews at these shelters. The researcher also travelled to those participants in the selected shelters, and again explained the purpose of the study, and reminded them of the consent form they had to sign. The participants gave their consent voluntarily.

The researcher conducted two interviews with each of the two social workers, in English, and used interviewing skills such as probing, reflecting, paraphrasing, and summarising to elicit information. In the second interview she made modifications to the questions with a view to enhancing the quality of the interviewing procedure to be applied during the main inquiry. The pilot test, or trial run, is an instrument in qualitative interviewing which allows a researcher to test the method of data collection (Neuman, 2005). In this instance the researcher had the opportunity to

establish a relationship with the participants. She re-assessed her skills in conducting a research interview with the aim of collecting information. The data collected during pilot testing were not included in the main research process.

Reworking the interview guide ensured that the questions were correctly formulated and understood, and that the required data were obtained. The duration of each interview was between 45 minutes and one hour. The researcher conducted the pilot test to assess her interviewing skills and to determine the approximate duration of an interview. The interviews were conducted at the shelters where the participants felt more comfortable and relaxed. It was conducted in a safe, protected, and private environment devoid of disruptions.

At the conclusion of the pilot test, the researcher reviewed and modified the questions in the interview guide. It was found that her questions did not include biographical information, and some of the questions did not elicit as much information as expected. This was evidently because in the first interview, questions were closed rather than open-ended. The researcher consulted her supervisor to assess the first pilot interview questions, and both agreed to modify the interview guide. The pilot test assisted the researcher in deciding whether the questions were suitable and appropriate to provide her with the data required to answer the research question. After the transcripts were completed the researcher and her supervisor discussed the themes and identified possible gaps.

In order to compile a biographical profile, the following information was included:

- Age.
- Gender.
- Race.
- Years of experience.
- Social Work profession

The following questions were added to the interview guide as presented in Chapter 1 (section 1.9.1):

- Share with me the kind of stories they (the women) tell.
- Tell me how often you are debriefed, and how this helps you.
- Tell me more about other kinds of services you offer to the abused women.
- In your opinion, what are the reasons for not having second-stage housing developed?
- Share with me how you empower the women.
- In your opinion, what makes it difficult for the organisation to monitor the women once they have exited the organisation?
- Tell me about the procedure for referral and reintegration of women.

In the next section, the researcher presents a description of how she collected data.

2.7 DATA COLLECTION

According to Creswell (2009), data collection includes the setting of limits to a study, collecting information using semi-structured or unstructured interviews, observation, and analysis of documents and visual material. In addition, Fox and Bayat (2013) assert that when conducting phenomenological research, the concept of site selection means that the participants might be located at a single site, and that they are mostly people who have the same experience in the phenomenon under study.

In this research study, data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted with the social workers who provide social support services to abused women in shelters, in the Tshwane and Johannesburg region, Gauteng Province.

In the following section, the researcher discusses aspects of data collection and the methods employed to collect data.

2.7.1 Preparation for data collection

The researcher made the decision to undertake field research; she identified herself to the participants first and foremost as a researcher (Babbie, 2009). The Head of Department (HoD) at the Department of Social Development and the managers at the shelters, who are referred to as gatekeepers, regulate access to the shelters.

Gatekeepers as defined by Creswell (2010; 2013) are persons who grant researchers access to a setting. In preparation for data collection the researcher wrote letters to the Head of the Department of Social Development in Gauteng Province, the Gauteng Shelter Forum, and the individual shelter managers informing them of the study and its purpose, and requested permission to conduct interviews with the identified individuals at the shelters (Addendum 4). The researcher wrote letters to the individual participants informing them of the purpose of the study and how they could participate; she explained what would happen with the research results and requested participants to volunteer their participation in the study (Addendum 1).

The researcher visited the participants to inform them of the study and requested them to complete the consent form once they have agreed to participate in the study; it was thought that this made the participants feel important and less threatened by the position of the researcher (Addendum 2). The researcher requested the sampled shelters to present documents that would provide the background of the shelters and the services rendered, such as policies, their constitution, guidelines, and other relevant available records (Addendum 5). The researcher drafted a consent form for the volunteers to sign, and provided debriefing to the research participants (Addendum 3). The letters outlined dates, venues, and times of the interviews. The purpose and the criteria for inclusion in the research were explained to the participants. She further explained the purpose and value of the research findings, and their dissemination. With regard to ethical issues, the participants were assured of confidentiality.

In preparing participants for data collection, the researcher was cognisant of her ongoing relationship with participants and how this might influence the outcome of the study (Haynes, 2012). The researcher was aware of the possible influence that she might exert in the data-collection process and examined her relationship with the participants and how the dynamics of this relationship could affect responses to her questions. The researcher reflected on her powers of observation and, amongst others, the methodological aspects of her research and her actions in conducting these interviews. The researcher exercised self-reflection in order to identify her

own biases, differing views, experiences in the victim empowerment field, responses to the questions, and her position in the social sciences field.

2.7.2 Methods of data collection

Creswell (2014; 2009) refers to data collection as a series of interrelated activities which aim to gather good information in order to answer emerging research questions. The principal methods of obtaining qualitative data are research interviews and group discussions. Data can be collected through unstructured or semi-structured and in-depth interviews. The researcher collected data through semi-structured interviews with participants who volunteered and gave voluntarily informed consent to participate in the study (Neuman, 2011).

The application of the semi-structured interviews helped to keep the discussions focussed towards the goal of the study. The closed questions and the guiding questions were modified by the researcher after the pilot testing interviews. The formulated requests and open-ended questions corresponded to the overall goal and objectives of the study, as highlighted above in section 2.6.

In collecting data, the researcher read documents relating to the selected shelters, their constitutions, policies, reports, newsletters, and guidelines to understand the role and responsibility of the shelter and how do shelters operates, what achievements and challenges they experience in the process of rendering services to abuse women and what are their highlights and best practices. During the interview sessions, the researcher applied interview techniques such as paraphrasing, clarification, and probing to ensure an effective interview (Greeff in De Vos et al., 2005). The interviews were conducted after the process of the research had been explained once again to each participant. The participants were informed of the benefits of being part of the research, as they would be assisting in providing recommendations that would be applied to improve the rendering of social support services to abused women in shelters (Fox & Bayat, 2013).

The researcher observed the participants' verbal and non-verbal communication. All the interviews were conducted in English, and each interview lasted between 45

minutes and one hour, allowing the participants to share more of their experiences, challenges, and their suggestions in offering social support services to abused women in shelters.

The researcher used the audio recordings to record the interviews after the participants had granted permission. However, one participant was willing to share her experiences, but felt uncomfortable about being audio recorded. The researcher explained that the purpose of the audio recording was merely to complement what she had been writing, to assist her in transcribing the exact words that were spoken by the participants. The researcher explained the ethical considerations and confidentiality and that the tape recordings would be placed in a lockable cabinet. Once the research had been approved the tape recordings would be destroyed. After debriefing, this participant allowed the researcher to audio tape the interview and write down the most salient points.

During the interviews, there were few disruptions such as the sound of the vehicles, people opening/closing doors, telephones ringing; although in three shelters there were problems with the offices where the interviews were conducted because the social workers share their offices with the auxiliary social workers and volunteers. The interviews were conducted in the offices of the shelter managers who were not present at that time. The researcher provided debriefing to one social worker because she did not feel comfortable with the idea of being recorded during the interview. The researcher had to wait for some social workers because they were busy with other duties and the interviews had to start after the agreed commencement times. Some of the participants decided to postpone the dates of the interviews due to other commitments.

After conducting 10 interviews the researcher, together with the supervisor, perused the transcripts and both agreed that data saturation had been reached as there seemed to be repetition of the same information; it was apparent that there was no new information that would come to light from the two other participants. The information needed was mainly on the experiences of the social workers who offered social support services to abused women in these shelters.

2.7.3 The role of the researcher

According to Creswell (2009), a researcher is the primary data collection instrument whose personal values, assumptions, and biases should be brought to light from the outset. The investigator's contribution to the research setting can be useful and positive rather than detrimental (Creswell, 2014).

The researcher wrote a letter requesting permission and negotiated with the gatekeepers at the Department of Social Development and the respective shelters. The researcher considered the rights of the participants and other ethical issues when conducting the study. After having obtained permission from the gatekeepers, the researcher contacted the individual social workers from the identified shelters by sending them consent forms and letters outlining the purpose of the study and requesting their participation. She made appointments with the social workers for the interviews.

The researcher travelled to the respective shelters for the interviews on the dates of the appointments. During the preparation phase, one social worker raised her concern and fears of being audio recorded. The researcher listened to the social workers' concerns and fears, and clarified the purpose of recording the interviews. The researcher explained that the audio recorder serves as a supporting system for data keeping and it will assist with data verification and analysis. The researcher provided debriefing to that particular social worker. The interviews took place in the office of the social worker or the office in which the social workers felt safe and comfortable. The researcher sought to use the following interviewing skills to collect data from the social workers, as outlined by Creswell (2009) and Babbie (2007).

Creating an enabling environment: The researcher established a good rapport with the participants, and a positive atmosphere conducive to trust and cooperation. This lessened interpersonal anxiety and made participants feel comfortable, which enabled them to speak openly and freely about their experiences in rendering social support services to abused women. The researcher explained the procedure to be followed during the interviews, and that each interview would take approximately 45 minutes to one hour at most.

Asking relevant questions: The researcher asked relevant questions as informed by the interview guide. She also added questions after reviewing the interview guide, and after the pilot test interviews. The researcher asked open-ended questions that were brief and easy to understand.

Empathy: The participants were encouraged to recount their experiences from their own frame of reference, and were assured that they would not be judged in any way.

Attending and listening: The researcher listened attentively to the words spoken by the participants and recorded the interviews using the tape recorder; she paid attention to their verbal and non-verbal communication in order to understand their experiential world.

Once data had been collected, the process of data analysis commenced.

2.7.4 Methods of data analysis

Babbie (2009) defines methods of data analysis as methods of examining social research data without converting them to numerical format. Data analysis consists of preparing and organising text data such as transcriptions, dividing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in a discussion (Creswell, 2013).

Content analysis was used to analyse the data. According to Maree (2010) content analysis is a systematic approach to qualitative data analysis that identifies and summarises content. This type of analysis also involves inductive, deductive and iterative processes where one looks for similarities and varieties in texts that corroborate or disconfirm theory.

The content of the data was analysed on two levels: the first and basic level of analysis involved a descriptive account of the data, namely what the participants actually said, with nothing read into it and nothing assumed about it. The second and higher level of analysis was interpretive, which means that it was concerned

with interpreting the data and trying to understand what was meant by the response, or what was inferred or implied. It is sometimes called the latent level of analysis (Nieuwenhuis, 2007).

As the researcher undertook the process of data collection, she transcribed the 10 interviews which had been digitally recorded. Once that had been completed, the researcher had to read through all of them to assess whether the data made sense. The audio-recorded interviews were listened to and transcribed in Sotho and Zulu, and thereafter translated into English. The researcher read through all the transcriptions carefully, and made notes of ideas as they came to mind. The data was aggregated into smaller themes to prepare for analysis. All the data collected were recorded through notetaking, audio recording, and recording and saving the information on a computer in accordance with the developed themes. The coding process assisted the researcher in generating a description of the setting or people as well as the categories or themes for analysis.

The researcher used the following eight steps for qualitative data analysis as stated by Tesch (cited in Creswell, 2009):

- The researcher read all the transcripts carefully to understand everything the participants had related. All the ideas that the researcher developed from going through the transcripts were noted.
- The researcher selected one document, the most interesting one, the shortest one, or the one at the top of the pile. She then studied the document and made notes on all the implied messages and the themes that she identified.
- When the task had been completed, the researcher made a list of all the topics and clustered them together with similar topics; possible clusters could be major and/or unique topics. The process assisted the researcher in categorising the topics.

- The researcher gave the topics code names. The transcripts were revisited and codes were placed in relevant places.
- The researcher used more descriptive wording for the topics and termed them categories; she then looked for ways of reducing the total list of categories by grouping together related topics.
- The researcher made her final decisions as to the abbreviation for each category.
- The researcher assembled data material belonging to each theme or category in one place, and a preliminary analysis was done.
- After the researcher had completed all these steps, the existing data were recorded.

In the following section, the researcher discusses how the data were verified to ensure the competency of the research.

2.8 METHODS OF DATA VERIFICATION

Creswell (2014; 2009) defines qualitative validity as the process according to which a researcher tests the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures. Qualitative reliability indicates that a researcher's approach has been consistent across the research of different researchers and different projects. The researcher used open coding of data. She also printed a hard copy of the data and compared the printout with the originals.

Guba proposes four criteria that should be considered by researchers in pursuit of a trustworthy study, namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Kumar, 2008; Silverman, 2001). Trustworthiness needs to be established in a study in order to validate the research findings and conclusions. In this study, Lincoln and Guba's model (in Kumar, 2008; Shenton, 2004; Rolfe, 2004; Krefting, 2003) of ensuring the trustworthiness of qualitative data was applied in relation to the following five aspects:

2.8.1 Truth value

According to Babbie (2009) and Creswell (2009), truth value is one of the aspects which a researcher has to consider to determine how well the data and processes of analysis have addressed the intent of the research. Different sources of data are triangulated by examining evidence elicited from these sources and using it to build coherent justification for generating themes, which themes are then established based on combining several sources of data or perspectives gleaned from the participants; only then can this process add value to the validity of the study (Creswell, 2014).

During the collection of data the researcher used a tape recorder to audio record the interviews, observed the reactions of the participants during the interview process, and made notes based on their responses. After data collection the researcher transcribed the recorded information gathered from the individual participants and compared the transcripts with her notes to determine and verify the credibility of the data.

2.8.2 Applicability

Guba (in Krefting 1991; 2003) explains applicability as the extent to which the research findings can be used in other contexts. In qualitative research, applicability is done through transferability. In order to achieve transferability the researcher provided a dense description of the research methodology employed. This offered adequate information about the context, which would allow the reader to determine whether the research environment is similar to another, and whether the findings would be valid in another setting (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011).

The researcher assessed the usefulness of the collected data which could contribute to the development of knowledge with regard to social support service interventions. The findings of the research were applied to the other shelters across Gauteng.

2.8.3 Consistency

Consistency of data refers to whether the findings would be consistent if the study were repeated using the same participants and whether using the same context would generate the same results (Guba in Krefting, 1991; 2003). A study is deemed dependable when similar results can be obtained if the study is repeated with the same people or in a similar situation (Rubin & Babbie, 2007).

Consistency in this study was established through a strategy of dependability by using an independent coder. The researcher and the independent coder independently coded the data, and subsequently had consensus discussions with the supervisor on the themes, subthemes, and categories presented as research findings.

2.8.4 Neutrality

Neutrality means making sure that the research findings are free from bias. Guba (in Krefting, 1991; 2003) proposes that neutrality in qualitative research should focus on the neutrality of the data and not that of the researcher. This suggests conformability as a strategy to achieve neutrality. In qualitative research, neutrality of the data is given more emphasis than the neutrality of the researcher as neutrality is established through the strategy of conformability. According to Babbie and Mouton (2007), the concept of conformability is the qualitative researcher's concern with objectivity.

The aim was to establish neutrality through the criterion of triangulation, which is continuously testing for consistency of the findings generated by the different data-collection methods. All the interviews were audio recorded and notes were taken by the researcher. The audio recordings were transcribed immediately after the interviews.

2.8.5 Peer examination

The researcher sought input from her colleagues who were well-versed in qualitative research and who could lend veracity to the study by asking questions,

generally shedding light on aspects of the research, and making suggestions. Creswell (2009), Krefting (2003) and Rolfe (2004) find this method constructive. The researcher also had an expert qualitative researcher as study leader. The researcher acknowledged the role of the study leader as someone who would not interfere with the collected data, compromise the integrity of the data collected, or influence the research findings.

The researcher handed over the tape recordings and the transcripts to a colleague to identify possible discrepancies, if any, and to verify the accuracy of what had been recorded. The researcher sent the transcripts to her supervisor to seek input and guidance. Additional input was sought from the research unit in the Department of Social Development and the Department of Social Work at Unisa who are experts in qualitative research.

2.8.6 Reflexivity

To ensure that the researcher's background, perceptions, and interests did not influence the reliability of the data, the researcher practised reflexivity through the use of a field journal (Shenton, 2004; Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Reflexivity requires a self-critical attitude from the researcher to check her preconceptions of the research (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011).

In this study the researcher assumed an objective position since she is employed at the Department of Social Development, and works directly with social workers who provide social support services to the abused women in shelters. The researcher clearly understood the influence her role as a manager in the Department of Social Development might have on the data-collection process and data analysis. She reflected on the nature of her involvement in the research process and the way it could shape its outcome. Reflexivity was applied throughout the research process. Any questions that arose that had a bearing on her research were clarified by the researcher in her capacity as a researcher, and not as an employee of the Department of Social Development.

2.8.7 Authority of the researcher

The authority of a researcher is linked to the view that a researcher operates as a measurement tool (Guba in Krefting, 1991; 2003). The researcher is a social work manager working in the field of victim empowerment. She has been involved in the field of victim empowerment since 1998, and in August 2004 she was employed by the Department of Social Development and was allocated the responsibility of managing shelters for abused women. The researcher has the privilege of working in an organisation that provides shelter services in Gauteng Province. She has an extensive network of relationships with the professionals in the shelters that accommodate abused women.

During the study the researcher employed a process of self-reflection and awareness of her authority and knowledge with regard to the topic in hand; she remained objective throughout the process of conducting her research by being honest and ethically mature.

2.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

David and Sutton (2011) define ethics as principles that provide the researcher with guidance to protect research participants from possible harm and to preserve their rights. Furthermore, Creswell (2012) asserts that ethical behaviour should be an integral part of a researcher's role as an insider/outsider in relation to the participants when assessing issues that may cause apprehension or fear on the part of the interviewees in disclosing sensitive information. The researcher should establish supportive, respectful relationships with the participants without stereotyping or judging them. It is the voices of the participants which will be represented in the final study. The researcher received ethical approval for the study from the Department of Research and Ethics Committee from the University of South Africa (Addendum 9).

To ensure that the researcher remains ethical in her behaviour at all times, the following ethical considerations were taken into account:

2.9.1 Informed consent

According to Anderson and Morrow (2011), informed consent can be defined as "...the invisible act of evaluating information and making a decision, and visible act of signifying the decision." In addition, Rubin and Babbie (2010) contend that participants must not be coerced into participating in the study.

The researcher drafted the consent form, which was voluntarily and without coercion signed by the participants. The form provided information as to the purpose of the study, how long it will take, and what the participant's role in the study would be; what would happen to the research results, and how the participants would benefit from the study. The researcher carried out all the administrative work pertaining to her research from her office, such as using telephones and computers (electronic mail). She sent an explanatory letter (Addendum 4) to the Gauteng Department of Social Development, and presented an outline of the research.

The social workers completed and signed the consent forms, and consented voluntarily to participate in the research project (Addendum 2). They clearly understood the objectives of the study. The researcher travelled to the shelters where the interviews were conducted, and where the participants felt more comfortable and relaxed in a safe, protected and, private environment, with limited disruptions.

2.9.2 Confidentiality

Confidentiality should be considered at all times in order to respect and protect the participants. According to Holloway and Wheeler (2010), confidentiality is an issue separate from anonymity but it is as important when working with participants. Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey (2011) view confidentiality as the non-disclosure of information provided by the participants to the researcher.

The researcher drafted a confidentiality clause as part of the consent form, explained to the respondents the aspect of confidentiality, and how long the individual interviews would take. The researcher also informed the participants that

their personal details would be kept in a private lockable cabinet at home and would not under any circumstances be revealed to other people. The researcher informed them that the final report and research results would be handed over to the supervisor. The researcher kept the participants' records anonymous by coding them, using the letters of the alphabet (A - J).

2.9.3 Compensation

Babbie (2013; 2009) argues that it is fairly common practice to pay experimental and focus group subjects for their participation, compensation that can be in different forms, other than cash, but can include gift certificates, contributions to charities, and other gifts. Creswell (2014; 2010) emphasises that the researcher must at all costs avoid exploitation of participants; there needs to be an element of reciprocity and participants should be commended for their involvement in the study.

The researcher provided letters of appreciation to all the social workers who participated in the study for their contributions and willingness. She was conscious and mindful of the influence she may have during this process as well as her position in this respect. The researcher's position during the research process was that of a researcher and not a government employee.

2.9.4 Debriefing of participants

Babbie (2007) suggests that an appropriate solution to problems caused by the research experience is for researchers to debrief participants following the interviews.

The researcher conducted debriefing firstly after each interview, and then referred participants to an identified social worker for further debriefing, if needed. During the interviews, the researcher provided debriefing to one social worker who felt uncomfortable being audio recorded. The researcher allayed her fears by explaining the purpose of the tape recorder and that the information collected would be transcribed using codes or letters of the alphabet; and that the recordings and transcripts would be kept in a lockable cabinet and destroyed at the conclusion of

the research project. The researcher set her mind at rest in dealing with her lack of trust and fear of victimisation.

2.9.5 Management of information

According to Merraim (2002), the ethical management of information is closely linked to confidentiality. Creswell (2009; 2014) and Kumar (2011) contend that the management of information denotes the collection and management of information from one or more sources, and the distribution of that information to one or more audiences. This occasionally involves those who have a stake in, or a right to, that information.

In this study the researcher ensured that the process of data collection was carried out in a proper and ethical way. The information collected was coded and kept strictly confidential. The transcripts (without any identifying information) were made available to the research supervisor and an independent coder with the sole purpose of assisting and guiding the researcher. The audiotapes were coded to conceal any identifying information; they were stored in a locked office in a steel, locked cabinet to which only the researcher had access. Upon completion and approval of the research, the audiotapes and other confidential information would be destroyed.

2.10 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The sample had a number of limitations that could have influenced the study. All participants were female social workers; it proved to be difficult to balance the two genders as social work is a female-dominated profession, and very few male participants were available. In similar vein, other racial groups were not represented. Of the 12 social workers that were identified for the interviews, only 10 were interviewed after the researcher realised data saturation had been reached. This study was conducted only in Gauteng Province, and as a relatively small sample was taken, the findings could not be generalised. As this study was explorative and descriptive in nature, further research is needed to verify the findings.

2.11 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

Chapter 2 addressed the research methodology and how it was applied to the study. It also focused on the research method and the sampling procedure that were followed in the study. Furthermore, the chapter provided details regarding the data-collection method utilised in the study. It also discuss in detail the research methods used and, Lastly, limitation of the study is presented.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND LITERATURE CONTROL

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the research findings which emanated from the research. The findings that emerged from the semi-structured interviews are presented, discussed, and compared with the existing literature related to the topic of the study.

Further to the discussions in Chapters 1 and 2, this study followed a qualitative research approach with the aim of developing an in-depth understanding of the experiences of social workers who provide social support services to abused women in shelters in the Johannesburg and Tshwane regions in Gauteng Province. The objectives of this research study, as discussed in Chapter 1 (section 1.6.3) were to explore, describe, and contextualise – from the social workers' perspective, their experiences, the challenges they face, and their suggestions that could make a difference and support them in their endeavours to assist these abused women. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data from 10 participants.

Prior to data collection, the researcher applied the following criteria in the selection of participants:

- Social workers who were offering social support services to abused women in shelters in the Tshwane and Johannesburg regions, Gauteng Province at the time. These regions/districts were more accessible than any of the others, and the researcher therefore had more time to conduct the interviews.
- Social workers with working experience of three years and more in a shelter, since they have a more extensive background on the challenges and the effectiveness of social support services rendered to the abused women in shelters.

- Social workers who were able to converse in English, Sotho, and Zulu, since the researcher was familiar with these languages. Social workers were South African citizens and were familiar with the mandate of shelters for abused women.
- Social workers who were registered as such in accordance with the Social Service Professions Act (Act 110 of 1978). The South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP), with whom all practising social workers are required by law to register, had a total number of 11 111 social workers registered in October 2005. Social workers have to re-register (or de-register if they so wish) by merely presenting proof of their qualifications and paying the registration fee.
- Of the 12 social workers only 10 were interviewed after the researcher realized that data saturation has been reached. There was repetition of responses to interview questions. Secondly, the other two social workers were unable to participate due to work-related matters.

It should be noted that the social auxiliary workers, house mothers, and shelter managers were excluded as participants since the focus was on the social workers' experiences, challenges, and suggestions in providing social support services for abused women in shelters.

The participants consisted of 10 social workers who provided social support services to abused women. Table 1 below provides a summary of demographical data of these participants. Table 1 highlights the race, home language, age, gender, years of experience, and profession of participants. In order to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, alphabetical codes were assigned to replace the names of the participants. The researcher, the independent coder, and the supervisor then analysed the data using the eight steps by Teach (in Creswell, 2009). The researcher found similarities between the coding done by the independent coder and her own. The researcher in consultation with her supervisor collated the data contained in the two reports.

3.2 DEMOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS

The researcher adhered to the ethical principles governing anonymity, and the participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identities. Demographical data of the 10 participants are presented in Table 1 below, which reflect their race, gender, age, home language, years of experience, and professions.

Table 1: Summary of demographical data

| CODE | RACE | GENDER | AGE | HOME LANGUAGE | YEARS OF EXPERIENCE | PROFESSION |
|------|---------|--------|-----|---------------|---------------------|---------------|
| A | African | Female | 30 | Zulu | 2yrs, 5 months | Social worker |
| B | African | Female | 32 | Zulu | 2yrs, 6 months | Social worker |
| C | African | Female | 42 | Tsonga | 4yrs | Social worker |
| D | African | Female | 41 | Zulu | 5yrs | Social worker |
| E | African | Female | 35 | Zulu | 5yrs | Social worker |
| F | African | Female | 34 | Sotho | 6yrs | Social worker |
| G | African | Female | 44 | Tswana | 4yrs | Social worker |
| H | African | Female | 43 | Zulu | 10yrs | Social worker |
| I | African | Female | 39 | Zulu | 4yrs | Social worker |
| J | African | Female | 38 | Venda | 6yrs | Social worker |

The section below discusses the biographical information of the participants.

Race of the participants

Participants were all Africans. No individuals from other races were working at the shelters; hence, they were not included in the study. This is supported by the Department of Labour report (2008), which suggests that the overall picture of the racial demographics of social workers are on average African as the largest group (48.9%), with whites the second largest group (32.1%). The average number of

coloured people involved in social work and social work associated professions is almost three times (13.9%) the number of Indian/Asian people (5.0%).

Gender of the participants

The 10 participants were all female social workers who provided social services to abused women in the shelters. This indicates that most of the social workers in the shelters are female. The findings are likely to be gender biased, i.e., social support services in shelters are virtually exclusively provided by female social workers. This was not surprising as this unequal distribution between the genders suggests that women are dominating the social welfare profession. According to the Department of Labour (2008), available data reveal that social workers are overwhelmingly female and that the relative proportional breakdown has remained fairly consistent over time. According to Dewane (2006), social work is a profession largely dominated by women as their roles are perceived as more “caring.” Also, their salaries are not on a par with those in other professions.

Age of the participants

The participants’ ages ranged between 30 and 44 years. The findings revealed that five of the participants were between ages 30 and 35, while six were between ages 36 and 44. The age distribution of the participants is consistent with the findings of Bastable, Gramet, Jacobs, and Sopczyk (2010), namely that individuals at this stage are mostly focused on building their careers. Building their families and careers seem to be the most important events at this stage. On the same issue, Bastable et al. (2010) state that middle adulthood is the longest period of a person's life. This is the stage when individuals are mostly immersed in their careers, when their responsibilities increase as they have to balance relationships, raise their children, and further their careers. According to Dacey, Travers, and Fiore (2009), the middle adulthood stage spans the period 30 to 44 years of age.

Home language

Africans in South Africa comprise nine officially recognised ethnic groups, namely amaSwati, amaZulu, Bapedi, Basotho, Batswana, Ndebele, Tsonga, Venda, and

Xhosa. Language proved to be a critical aspect for effective communication during the interviews. However, all the participants felt comfortable to be interviewed in English. Six participants' home language was Zulu, one participant's home language was Tsonga, one was Sotho, one was Tswana, and one was Venda. This is attributed to the geographical location of the participants which is Tshwane and Johannesburg.

The two areas comprise a population of different cultures. Tshwane is named after a local chief by the same name. Tshwane is also the traditional African name for this area which, according to legend, was used by the early African inhabitants. Tshwane is indeed a cultural microcosm of Africa and the world. Each of South Africa's cultures is represented here. The original residents of the Tshwane valley were the Ndebele, an offshoot of the Southern Nguni people. Today the most common language spoken is Sepedi, by the Sotho group originating from the northern areas of Southern Africa. This is followed by Afrikaans, whose large community in Tshwane dates back to the late 1800s when Pretoria was the capital of the Boer Republic. Dominant local languages are Setswana, Xitsonga, isiZulu, and English (City of Tshwane, 2016). In 2016, Johannesburg had an estimated population of 4.4 million, while the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Area had a population estimated at 8 million (City of Johannesburg, 2016).

Johannesburg Demographics

The most common racial groups in Johannesburg are Black Africans (76.4%), Coloured (5.6%), White (12.3%) and Indian/Asian (4.9%). About one-third of the population speak an Nguni language, 25% speak a Sotho language, 18% speak English, 7% speak Afrikaans, and 6% speak Tshivenda. About 7% of the population of Johannesburg are illiterate, and 3.4% have only a primary education; 66% of households are headed by a single person, and 29% of residents in JHB live in informal dwellings (City of Johannesburg, 2016).

Years of experience

On average, the participants had working experience of two to 10 years. Two participants had experience of two years five months, and two years six months respectively. They did not qualify in accordance with the criteria for selection presented in Chapter 2; they were, however, included after consultation with the supervisor. Three participants had four years' experience; two had five years' experience; two had six years' experience; while only one had 10 years' experience. Permission was granted that social workers with as little as three years' experience in providing social support services to abused women could be included, albeit contrary to the initial criteria for inclusion. Two shelters responded that their social workers do not meet the criteria and they do not have other social workers; thus the two shelters were excluded from the sampling and the researcher was left with 10 shelters. An experience can be defined as an event which leaves an impression on a person (Soanes et al., 2001). From a person-centred approach (PCA), experience can be regarded as an umbrella term relating to all needs, behaviour, emotions, and values of a person; and that these experiences cannot be separated from one another (Grobler et al. in Du Plessis, 2011). According to Dacey (2009), this is the time when social workers are balancing their careers and family life. What is clear, however, is that the majority of social workers and social work associated professionals enter the profession between the ages 25 and 29 (Earle, 2007). The relatively low numbers of social workers younger than 25 can be attributed to the delayed onset of training and/or the time required to complete the course. Most are involved in training at this stage.

Social work profession

Professions are distinguished, in part, by the roles and purposes they fulfil within society. The existence of a profession requires a unique purpose, a clear identity that makes it distinct from other occupations. For the social work profession, that unique purpose is a dual mission to simultaneously enhance social functioning and improve social conditions. Although this dual mission is central to our professional

identity, it can lead to intellectual, political, and practical challenges (Hahn & Scanlon, 2016).

The majority of employees in welfare NPOs are social workers (76%). Half of the organisations also employ social auxiliary workers who are registered as paraprofessionals; other organisations employ community development workers (27%), home-based care workers (23%), early childhood development workers (16%), and child and youth care workers (15%). Only 11% of organisations employ psychologists. Thus, welfare services remain dominant within the social work profession (Patel et al., 2012).

3.3 PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS AND LITERATURE CONTROL

In this section, the findings are presented as themes, subthemes, and categories that emerged through the data collected from the social workers that were interviewed and based on the eight steps of qualitative data analysis as identified by Tesch (in Cresswell, 2009). Each theme constitutes a series of concepts that have been grouped to form subthemes and categories which exist within the overall theme. To avoid ambiguity, the themes are presented separately with each theme leading to clearly marked subthemes.

The following seven themes emerged from the data collected:

Theme 1: Social workers' personal experiences of working in a shelter for abused women.

Theme 2: The nature of the abuse of women who come to the shelter.

Theme 3: Social Support services for empowering women.

Theme 4: Variety of challenges related to work in the shelters.

Theme 5: Recommendations for addressing challenges.

Theme 6: Teamwork, internally and externally.

Theme 7: Funding for effective services.

Theme 8: Policy alignment.

An overview of the themes, subthemes, and categories are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Themes, subthemes, and categories

| Theme | Subthemes | Categories |
|---|---|---------------------------|
| Theme 1: Social workers' personal experiences of working in a shelter for abused women. | 1.1: Participants experienced the work as challenging but also enriching. | |
| | 1.2: Social workers' experience of the needs of women who come to the shelters. | |
| Theme 2: The nature of the abuse of women who come to the shelters. | 2.1: Physical abuse. | |
| | 2.2: Psychological/emotional abuse. | |
| | 2.3: Sexual abuse. | |
| | 2.4: Economic abuse. | |
| Theme 3: Social support services for empowering women. | 3.1: Healing and restorative programmes. | 3.1.1: Counselling. |
| | | 3.1.2: Spiritual support. |
| | | 3.1.3: Family therapy. |
| | 3.2: Life skills programmes. | |
| | 3.3: Skills development programmes. | |
| | 3.4: Other programmes such as skills training on sewing, baking, cooking, and other community-based programmes. | |
| | 3.5: Help with legal procedures. | |

| Theme | Subthemes | Categories |
|---|--|--|
| | | 3.5.1: Income-generating programmes. |
| | | 3.5.2: Awareness campaigns. |
| | 3.6: Community-oriented programmes. | |
| | 3.7: Reintegration/Reunification programmes. | |
| Theme 4: Participants reported a variety of challenges related to work in the shelters. | 4.1: Women returning to the perpetrators – reinforcing the cycle of abuse. | |
| | 4.2: Some women not motivated to take part in programmes. | |
| | 4.3: Referring agents not adhering to admission criteria – “dumping” women. | |
| | 4.4: Lack of networking with other professionals causing several challenges. | 4.4.1: Networking for effective communication and thus interventions. |
| | | 4.4.2: The lack of networking for helping foreigner nationals. |
| | | 4.4.3: Networking for security and resources related to human trafficking and effective help to women. |
| | | 4.4.4: Networking at shelter forums and judiciary systems. |
| Theme 5: | 5.1: Human resources issues. | 5.1.1: More |

| Theme | Subthemes | Categories |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| Recommendations for addressing challenges. | | professionals for the number of clients to be helped. |
| | | 5.1.2: Supervision of social workers. |
| | | 5.1.3: Professional development programmes. |
| | | 5.1.4: Attention to working conditions of social workers. |
| | 5.2: The need for physical resources. | 5.2.1: Space and aids for professional interviews. |
| | 5.3: Effective after-care services. | 5.3.1: More effective follow-up services |
| | | 5.3.2: Second-stage housing. |
| Theme 6: Teamwork: internally and externally. | | |
| Theme 7: Funding for effective services. | | |
| Theme 8: Policy alignment. | | |

In the next section, themes are presented separately and the accompanying subthemes and categories are presented and confirmed or endorsed by direct quotes from the transcripts of the interviews. The identified themes, subthemes, and categories with their supporting storylines from the transcripts, are compared and contrasted with the body of available literature.

3.4 THEME 1: SOCIAL WORKERS' PERSONAL EXPERIENCES IN A SHELTER FOR ABUSED WOMEN

This theme was deduced from the information provided by the participants in response to the researcher's request: "Tell me more about your experiences in offering social support services to abused women in shelters." Mhango (2012) argues that professionals are there to enable victims of violence to develop self-confidence, self-esteem, and negotiation skills through a process of empowerment. They also enable victims to cope with their shortcomings and adapt to their situations. Adams, Dominelli, and Payne (2002); Jasper and Jumaa (2005); Roos (2005); Sale (2005); and Barsky (2007) define empowerment as the process according to which individuals, groups, and/or communities take control of their circumstances and achieve their goals, which would enable them to work towards maximising the quality of their lives. This correlates with Hetling's view (2011) that for many battered women, social work intervention constitutes a safety net. Apart from assisting abused women in gaining access to necessary resources, counselling and consultation services, social workers could help these individuals cope with their situation.

Subtheme 1.1: Participants experienced the work as challenging but enriching

The participants reported the work as being fulfilling as well as challenging and a learning experience. The quotes below indicate that the overwhelming majority of social workers acknowledge these challenges but are nonetheless dedicated to deliver the needed social support services. The challenges they mentioned relate to needs of the women who come to the shelter:

"It is fulfilling knowing that I have helped someone to claim her life back.... It has been bad, it has been great, and it has been awesome if I can say, but I have learned to wear my tekkies at times and run around the shelter I have learned to wear my heels at time I have learned to work more than I am supposed to have learned to be more emphatic, have learned to be more supportive... so all in all it has taught me to be who am I in this

present moment time and I can say to be more than a great social worker so I can call myself and say I am more than a great social worker.”

“I find it very difficult and challenging to work with victims that have experienced domestic violence and where especially the ones that stays in the shelter. Some cases are very complex and some of women are not emotional stable it’s a bit challenging because today you are okay and tomorrow you are a totally different person. Some of them are not honest enough to relate their story.”

“It is exciting and bring lot of good and bad experiences, especially dealing with lot of emotions, engaging with abused women who have undergone the terrible ordeal from their supposed to be loving and caring partners and husband. You work with women who have nearly been killed and some were saved by their children or neighbour... good part of the experience is when you see the client recover and gain the confidence again. To see them after intervention able to make decisions that affect their lives. To bring back the smile and happiness to the women and see them getting involved in planning their future. It is also exciting to see children going to school.”

Social workers traditionally use a series of steps or processes to help service beneficiaries, resolve their problems, and to access services. These processes cover a broad spectrum of interventions over the lifespan of people to improve their quality of life (Department of Social Development Guidelines on Assessment, 2015). Dangor et al. (2000) contend that counselling is regarded as an important intervention service to address the trauma experienced by women, but due to the lack of adequate professional staff to support them, and the limited resources available to strengthen the support services, social workers who provide trauma counselling in the shelters experience “burnout and exhaustion” and carry the emotional scars brought about by their continual exposure to the distress they endure by working with abused women. They empathise with these women who have over a long period of time been subjected to often life threatening situations.

At a more specific level, a study by Brown and Neku (2005) reports that social workers describe their work as “overwhelming” and “frustrating” because “the needs of the community are many, but the numbers of professionals available to assist families in rural areas are few.”

The following subtheme describes the challenging needs of women associated with the different kinds of abuse they are exposed to.

Subtheme 1.2: Social workers’ experiences of the needs of women who come to the shelters

Social workers are confronted daily by the repercussions of unemployment among women, a lack of shelter, emotional and physical trauma; and observing the physical scars of abuse. The participants have reported to have accommodated a number of abused women from the impoverished communities; many of them are unemployed and cannot afford even the most basic commodities. This is summarised in the following excerpts from women’s stories:

“They are unemployed and then if they don't put up with whatever situation is being given to them then it means they don't have anywhere to go so they actually come here because there is a shelter to make change in your life they actually want to change their lives they actually want to see if they can't claim their independence back so this is the place where women are being given an opportunity to claim back their independence.”

“Their lives are threatened and they look for safety and protection. Some have suffered hardship by their partners or husband. But others have been removed by the police from the streets and have suffered violence and crime in the streets.”

“Providing safety and protection in the shelter it's a benefit on its own, it's like you are given a second change to think about your life and make decision about your life and future.”

According to Rasool (2012), in most instances women arrive at shelters by way of informal networks (by word of mouth), usually when they are greatly concerned for

their own safety or that of their children. Shelters provide a safe refuge and a roof over their heads. While of primary importance, these are not the only benefits of entering a transition house. When women enter a shelter to escape an abusive relationship, they are at a critical point in their lives: they may either make the transition to a new life without abuse, or fall back into a cycle of violence with an ex-husband or -partner, or a new relationship in which the abusive patterns are repeated.

Dangor et al. (2000) state that shelters offer a variety of support services and play a vital role in assisting women and their children in making the transitions from violent homes to a safe space. Shelters provide crisis intervention, accommodation, and protection. Shelter service providers understand that providing a temporary and safe home is, however, not enough (Werksmans Attorneys, 2014). Many shelters in South Africa offer programmes that range from providing emergency support and practical assistance to implementing strategies to address violence against women and children (Department of Social Development Strategy for Sheltering Services, 2013 - 2018).

3.5 THEME 2: THE NATURE OF THE ABUSE OF WOMEN COMING TO THE SHELTER

This theme was prompted by the researcher's request: "Share with me the kind of stories do they (women) tell." In the following discussion several excerpts are included to illustrate not only the different aspects of abuse, but the severity and consequences thereof.

Subtheme 2.1: Physical abuse

Participants reported that the most common type of abuse that women report is physical and psychological/emotional maltreatment. They indicated that as they engage the abused women in the counselling sessions, women will talk about other kinds of abuse they have experienced. Participants reported that some women who enter the shelter have physical scars such as cigarettes burns, stab wounds, having been beaten with dangerous objects or thrown against furniture or walls.

Women's needs are related to the nature of abuse they suffered; the following story lines highlight the views of social workers:

"When they come here, most women report physical and emotional abuse. Those are the two main type of abuse that women have experience in their different life times, sometimes to a certain extend we do receive reports of rape cases but most you find physical and emotional maybe because of the area that we are in as well its quiet semi-rural then there's also financial abuse."

"Like last year we had a case where a woman was burned with acid and you know her breast was like near to fall down that was difficult for me to comprehend. We had this case where this woman was beaten by the partner and she ran away to the neighbour and he followed her, she then decided to go to a relative that lives in the area not far from where she lives, but because it was late at night, it was not safe for her but because she felt her life is in danger, on her way she was unfortunately gang raped by a group of three men."

"...through the physical abuse incident she ended up in the ICU in hospital... She was there in a coma for a period of two weeks, and it was not for the first time being admitted but the last one was a very serious incident, and it was a wake-up call for her because she felt that she could have died and then after that she said no, I'm not going back there so that I can be able to sort out my life."

Sanderson (2008) argues that another kind of physical abuse that leaves no physical evidence or scars occurs when a woman's head is, for example, forced into the toilet bowl, or she is immersed in an ice-cold bath, or locked up for an extended period of time. Physical neglect such as withholding food, water, shelter, and clothing can also be classified as physical abuse; this includes throwing objects at the victim, kicking, slapping, hitting, pushing, shoving, grabbing, choking, strangling, and inflicting head injuries, to name but a few. Death resulting from physical injuries is an unimaginable outcome for some women who are in an

abusive relationship. The most obvious and serious consequence of intimate violence toward women is the personal and mental suffering it causes, and the long-term toll it takes on women and their children, as can be seen from the excerpts quoted above (Slabbert, 2013).

Subtheme 2.2: Psychological/emotional abuse

Participants emphasise that they regard psychosocial or emotional maltreatment as more severe than physical abuse, as this has long-term effects in the lives of abused women; it does not reflect physically but is hidden deep within the psyche and contributes to severe trauma. It was evident that many abused women do not disclose the psychological/emotional abuse at first contact, but they disclose what they have suffered when the social worker further probes their experiences of abuse. Women are inclined not to speak about psychological/emotional and verbal abuse.

Morrison, Ellsberg, & Bott, (2004) indicate that some gender-based violence cases are subtle and not clearly recognisable. They are not openly acknowledged as in psychological abuse. Nevertheless, in certain cultural spheres, domestic violence is a private matter hidden from public scrutiny, and therefore outside the scope of public interference; this is confirmed by the following extracts:

“Emotionally you’ll find that most women stay with these emotional scars from the verbally abuse for a long time and they find it hard to deal with it, and in the house it’s seen as normal and this has destroyed them, because they were hoping that the abuser will change. You’ll notice that this person is not being beaten by the husband but it’s because you know there was this verbal abuse by the husband.”

“They are told that they are useless and they leave them and then they will say that he just left me now, they want to go back but even if they go back we have re-admissions, you’ll find a woman coming back again, you’ll find that now it’s the cycle you know it goes on and on, till she has to realise that she has to stand up on her own and work for herself.”

“I can’t even find words to explain the emotional experience of the cases that we deal with on a daily basis and it will give you the clear picture of the number of victimisation, when we talk of violence against women and children and what we have experienced in the shelter...deal with the women who has been in an abusive relationship let’s say for 15 years there’s emotional damage and there’s physical injuries there, trauma, hence we talk of the trauma that has been inflicted on that particular person so it is also like recently we have realised that also its touching on mental illnesses in terms of the severity.... we talk of internal injuries and mental bleeding... I don’t even think we have enough time to assist them because 15 years compare to 6 months or 9 months is like you tapping into something, then you just, it’s like a wound you just scratch and leave it like that to bleed.”

Nel et al. (in Mhango, 2012) define trauma as the immediate or long-term effects of a crisis experienced by an individual, which restricts his or her options. A traumatic incident is any situation faced by victims that induces unusually strong emotional reactions which have the potential of interfering with their ability to function either at the scene or at a later stage. Examples include the unexpected death of a loved one, sudden loss, rape, receiving health status information, and illness. In this context, trauma refers to the cognitive and emotive experiences the victim faces at the hands of the perpetrator.

Rausch and Goldenson (in Barnett, 2001) contend that acute stress may lead to post-traumatic stress disorder. They claim that battered women may not leave the abusive relationship even though they experience trauma. Symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder are, for example, re-living the traumatic event, painful recollections, numbing responses, exaggerated startle responses, disturbed sleep, difficulty in concentrating or remembering, anger, and avoidance of activities that evoke memories of the traumatic event. Barnett (2001) concurs that battered women may not be able to leave the abusive relationship because they have become debilitated by unabated, relentless, and excessive stress as well as physical and psychological torment at the hands of an abusive partner.

Subtheme 2.3: Sexual abuse

Participants indicated that sexual abuse is reported mostly by women who are unmarried; abused women that are married are unable to talk about their sexual activities because they do not regard it as rape when they are married. The social workers had the following to say:

“...others will tell you that their partners forces them to sleep with them in front of the children because most of them they stay in a room; its adults and the children in the same room so they are forced to sleep with them in front of the children and the children will witness all of that and others beat them and the children as well...”

“Recently we experience a number of young pregnant women accommodated in our shelter. Most of them are not married; they were cohabiting with their boyfriend; now they are been beaten up, chased out of the house; some they have small children as well. Many of them are supposed to be at school when...”

According to Laird (2001), sexual abuse is often reinforced by an unspoken code of silence. Some women are just not in a position to talk about their sexual abuse due to shame, guilt, and the fear that their families might disintegrate. Leburu (2015) support the statement when she stated that women living with violent partners are often unable to negotiate safe sex or to protect themselves against unsafe and coerced sex. Some women do not realise that they also have rights and will do everything their husbands/partners demand of them, just because they feel it is the right thing to do. Women are often not even aware that they are sexually abused. Several studies have indicated women's discomfort regarding certain sexual acts expected by their partners, while continuing to comply with these behaviours, because they see it as an obligation towards their partners – and they fall pregnant (Slabbert, 2013).

Subtheme 2.4: Economic abuse

Participants reported that abused women also bear economic abuse; they do not have control over financial decisions that affect them within the relationship, as highlighted in the following responses:

“Most are economically abused and if a person according to me is economically abused suffers all sorts of abuse by the perpetrator if woman is not economically okay there will be physically, verbal and mentally abused, if the person is not independent....woman is not employed and not financially stable then she is found to be dependent on the partner..”

“Men are cheating, staying away from home, sleeping around, spend money with girlfriends. Once they are confronted or found they beat their women to silence them. Some women are abused just to exercise power and control over them. Those are the educated women who are having good jobs. She was not financially depended on the husband but the husband was emotionally and physically abusive up to a point; okay she could see this happening but she thought it will be better and for the fact that she felt like if she leaves the guy, where will she going. She said that before she met this men she was employed and financially independent. She said that after the passing of both her parents her husband became worse with the abuse, and because she had no family in South Africa. Her father is from South Africa and her mother is from Zimbabwe.”

“When we talk of poverty you know poverty it's got too many phases, though we don't want to mention but poverty also plays a huge role in how women get in an abusive relationship.”

Saleebey (2002) maintains that informal resources always have something to offer the person who is in need despite poverty, oppression, and other hampering factors. Poverty and associated stress are key contributors to intimate partner violence.

Violence is frequently associated with inequality between partners, often of economic origin, despite the advantage it holds for both parties in the relationship (Jewkes, 2002). Studies indicate that economics and social factors such as unemployment, low wages, and inadequate housing contribute to a variety of forms of violence in society, including domestic violence (Dangor et al. 2000). A leading theory explaining the relation between poverty and intimate partner violence is that it is exacerbated by stress. Since poverty is inherently stressful, it has been argued that intimate partner violence may result from stress and that impoverished men have fewer resources to reduce their stress (Jewkes et. al., 2002).

3.6 THEME 3: SOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES FOR EMPOWERING WOMEN

The following responses emanated from the researcher's request: "Share with me the kind of social support services you offer in the shelters." The participants responded that the programmes offered all contribute to the empowerment of abused women who are willing to participate actively in the services available. All of them mentioned accommodation, safe and individual therapy, group work sessions, skills development and community work, and spiritual support. The participants shared the following about the services rendered to the abused women:

"...the provision of social support services in the shelter is very hectic and demanding, especially when dealing with human beings and adults for that matter."

"...Social support services involve giving the individual counselling, group work and community work. We also do re-integration of women back to their families and communities. We also provide the life skills programme which equip the women with different life skills for them to survive outside of the shelter environment. We provide accommodation, protection, care, and support to the clients through the sheltering services..."

"I like it here because you are in a position to see the women grow and develop, where you are able to empower them and monitor their progress...I think abused women do benefit on the social support services"

that we provide and it plays a critical role in their life and forms part of healing and assist them to develop confident and claim their life back.”

Bates and Toro (in Barnett, 2001) maintain that ordinarily, social support services enable individuals to reappraise the factors that are causing stress, alter their moods, improve feelings of control, raise their self-esteem, and increase their level of productive behaviours. Dangor et al. (2000) state that social support service provision to victims of abuse in the form of counselling and support is essential in South Africa. These authors believe that counselling assists the victims to deal with the reality of the traumatic experience that they have been exposed to. It also provides an opportunity for the victims to tell their stories in a calm and protected environment, and to deal with the emotions that they experienced during and after these incidents of abuse. Counselling also provides for therapeutic support and allows victims to participate in the decision-making process which affects their lives. Clarke, Pendry, and Kim (in Barnett, 2001) argue that battered women may be so humiliated and stressed that they ignore or withdraw from agencies or individuals that offer social support. Barnett (2001) further claims that despite considerable evidence that battered women are active help seekers, they may not necessarily be receptive to the support offered to them.

The following programmes or services were mentioned, specifically within the context of empowerment and capacity building:

Subtheme 3.1: Healing and restoration programmes

Participants reported that they have been trained in the healing and restorative programme. They are currently implementing this programme as it covers a broader spectrum of empowerment for the abused women, from the individual to the groups and communities. This programme operates during the period of stay at the shelter. The participants provided their views regarding the healing and restorative programme:

“We offer healing and restoration programme that we have been given by the Department of Social Development. This programme also focus more

on psychosocial services such as counselling and group therapy, there is a programme that teaches them life skills, such as parenting skills and communication skills.”

“...we also have the 9-week programme on restoration and healing which include life skills and skills development programmes. So, in the restoration and healing programme; we present the life skills where they talk about abuse in general they talk about boundaries...”

These services are designed to restore people's social functioning which has been impaired as a result of injury, disability, or a chronic physical or mental condition. These services are further aimed at helping people whose social functioning in the family and/or community has been impaired due to substance abuse, crime, violence, or chronic disease (Department of Social Development through their Framework for Social Welfare Services, 2013). Mesatywa (2009) emphasises the importance of professional help for women who are trapped in situations of intimate partner violence (IPV), as there are multiple needs to be addressed through practical assistance, counselling, medical care, help with emotional upheaval, amongst others.

According to the Department of Social Development Strategy for Sheltering Services (2013 - 2018) shelters equip victims with knowledge, skills, and the means to cope and survive after they exit the shelter system. These survivors of abuse should be empowered to timeously recognise the signs that could lead to a violent situation, and they should know what, how, and when to protect themselves from their violent partners. For example, it is essential that they be equipped with “emergency tips or safety kits” and methods of communication such as “signals” or “codes” to communicate “danger” to their families, friends, and neighbours, when necessary.

Category 3.1.1: Counselling

All participants indicated that they provide counselling services to abused women in shelters. This involves individual and group-work counselling sessions.

Furthermore, they regarded one-on-one engagement with the abused women as very effective and crucial in dealing with their innermost feelings and emotions. The focus is on the individual woman to tell her story in a private and intimate setting. It also enables social workers, in collaboration with these women, to draft and implement plans to encourage and assist them in decision making which would impact their future. Social work services usually start with relationship building, counselling or debriefing, group work, and interactive support of other victims of abuse. The participants had the following to share about counselling:

“We offer one on one counselling session once a week and then we have group therapy session where we do group counselling discussion on the common issues that affect them. The weekly programmes, for example include doing counselling with the women. We also do group therapy with them twice in a week and they participate in life skills programme but, hey, it is a struggle; women do not want to actively participate...this is about learning from one another and encourage one another that they are not the only ones who suffered and that people have done something about their sufferings.”

“One-on-one counselling sessions with the women...when they come I do check with them now and then whether they need to talk, if I am out of the office, you know sometimes attending a meeting, I will then have to reschedule the counselling session but if I am really around, it's every day.”

Coulshed and Arme (2006) contend that counselling is concerned with developmental issues, addressing and resolving specific problems, making decisions, coping with crises, developing insight and knowledge, working through feelings of inner conflict, or improving relationships with others. The social workers who work in the shelters for abused women provide psychosocial support services to the abused women on a daily basis through counselling and support, protection, and care (Dangor et al. 2000). They also provide social work support through counselling to address the feelings of hopelessness and the emotional scars, and assist these women in re-establishing their lives and empowering them by creating

an enabling environment beyond the shelter environment and preparing them for reintegration into the community, well-equipped with skills, knowledge, and expertise (Department of Social Development Strategy for Sheltering Services, 2013 - 2018). The support these women receive from one another also helps them cope with their shattered lives. Chronister, Harley, Aranda, Barr, and Luginbuhl (2011) and Gillum (2008) support the principle of group work for abused women because of its empowering qualities, while Gondolf (2007) emphasises the value of culturally focused counselling groups for the perpetrators of domestic violence.

Category 3.1.2: Spiritual support

In this category, participants reported that the church plays a very important role in the provision of spiritual support to these women. It helps the person to develop a sense of belonging and spiritual healing. The following responses confirm that spiritual support is regarded as part of the healing, restorative, and empowerment process:

“We also have spiritual services as part of the weekly schedule, this is rendered by the manager who is a minister of Salvation Army church, because the organization falls under the umbrella of the National Salvation Army church foundation. Every Thursday there is this spiritual program and it is facilitated by our manager and it also help in giving them back that sense of dignity and worthiness and it brings back hope in their lives.”

“We also assist them with the spiritual support, they do devotions on their own everyday night it depends with the group. Sometimes they do it in the morning, we sometimes join them when we are available, we always encourage the house mother to let them do devotion every Sunday.”

“.... Sunday church services assist those who are motivated to become independent.”

Landman and Theron (2007) emphasise the healing effect of spiritual support, and how faith can help women deal with IPV. Pyles (2007) contends that religious institutions could be highly supportive by offering spiritual, emotional, and practical

assistance. The author does, however, caution that these institutions could also be a hindrance since they might advocate silence and urge an abused woman to desist from divorcing her abusive partner.

Category 3.1.3: Family therapy for reintegration

Participants indicated that during the counselling process, some women have requested that their partners be called by the social workers and included in counselling sessions in an attempt to dissuade them from abusing their partners. Other participants reported that when preparing women to exit the shelters social workers send letters to the abusers inviting them to attend joint counselling sessions. Social workers also conduct home visits to provide intervention services to families, and to prepare them for the return of these abused women. The following excerpts support the experiences alluded to by the participants:

“So when we admit them we tell them from a word go that somehow during the process we are going to engage their partners/husbands when the need arise, hence we prepare them in time, but we don’t do it here, because we call this place a place of safety so we don’t invite the partners here, we call it family therapeutic session. It is a process where you allow both partners to tell their stories while at the same time deal with the emotions that comes up and let the partners understand the importance of communication instead of fighting. Work with the parties to develop their plan of action on how to address their problems, sometimes you find that children are also involved. I usually refer the children for child therapy while concentrating on the parents. It is not an easy session because you will pick up lot of defence mechanism and pretending. Hence you cannot do it once-off; it has to be three or more sessions, while preparing them for the reunification process.”

“First we prepare them that a shelter is not a permanent place to stay; we are just here to help you so that you can sort yourself out and you think clearly and you are able to digest everything that happen to you and you are able to go back and face reality. We do inform them that they will have to continue with their lives, or find their own place to stay, or that they will

have to go back and face the community they living with. So we start, according to me that is reunification because we started already to prepare them that they are going to be in the shelter for maybe three to six months, and when we tell them that during the counselling sessions we find that it helps the person to be ready and then ask for the permission first that can we start calling their family preparing them that you will be joining them again soon.”

“If they are not going back to where they were staying or maybe they have decided to look for their own place when they leave, we prepare the package for them especially and they are going to rent a room somewhere or get a stand and build a shack or whatever we give them food that they can start up with, we give them beds, chest of drawers, small stoves or hot plate, iron and all the basics; they get cutlery, pots, cookery, we give them blankets. We give them that to the ones that are willing to start up new life out there.”

Johnson (in Rasool, 2016) asserts that in many cases social workers include the abusers in couples therapy, an approach that hails from the family violence perspective. The author states that in this approach the focus is on reconciliation and conflict resolution, assuming that disagreements between partners are regarded as normal within family relations. Reconciliation within the marriage should be encouraged even when the husband/partner has received no treatment for his habit of abusing his wife/partner.

This agenda is intended to preserve family cohesion. On the other hand, the Department of Social Development through their Framework for Social Welfare Services (2013) maintains that developmental social welfare services need to be family focused to strengthen the functioning of individuals within families. Reintegration services are aimed at reintegrating and reunifying individuals and their families once interventions outside the home environment have been completed.

Subtheme 3.2: Life skills programmes

Life skills programmes are mechanisms for empowering parenting and relationship skills, and managing finances. Participants stated that most of the abused women that come to the shelters with their children are unable to take responsibility for these children; they are unable to care for themselves and are not equipped to make decisions. They do not have the skills to manage their finances because in most cases their partners take control of everything; these women are led to believe that others will always have to act on their behalf. The participants made the following comments concerning the life skill programmes offered:

“One other thing that we have experienced is that most women that come to our shelter, do lack parenting skills, yes they are benefiting as well because we make sure that as long as they stay in our shelter, we orientate them to adhere to the rules of the shelter, for example some of them they sit and watch TV with their children until 10pm at night, stuff like that. So we inform them that children are expected stop watching TV at 6pm or they should be in bed and are not watching TV. We are trying to help them set up rules for children and themselves and comply.”

“Parental skills programme...It teaches them mainly on being a parent, what does it entail being a parent, umm starting at the basics as the child is still young discipline, communicating with your children following up with your children know who your children are playing with...”

“This programme also addresses the healthy relationship between the parents and children. It also teaches people on decision making and ways in which families can bond and plan together or support each other. It also deals with the different roles of the mother and father in the family setting, the upbringing of the children and it also equip parents with skills to manage their relationships.”

According to Karnataka (2014), the life skills of a person develop continuously and in a dynamic manner. There are many skills which are needed to successfully negotiate each and every situation. According to the WHO (2013), life skills are “living skills” or abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals

to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life (Anon, 2010). Life skills are used every moment of our lives in various situations – choosing friends and careers, developing or breaking habits, making and breaking relationships, exercising discipline, understanding each other's needs, solving problems, and interacting with teachers and parents. By supporting mental wellbeing and behavioural preparedness, life skills education equips individuals to behave in pro-social ways, which would lead to healthy living (Nair, 2005).

Subtheme 3.3: Skill development programmes

All participants reported their skills development programmes as actual empowering programmes for those women who are motivated to free themselves from the bondage of dependency and abuse. These programmes concentrate on skills development, which in the shelter can facilitate proficiency in baking, sewing, beading, hair plaiting, as well as beauty therapy and the like. The participants had the following to share about skills development programme:

“We had women, a group of women who participated in the beautician programme and they created jewellery and beads of high standards, and all what they created was bought by a jewellery shop in Johannesburg. One lady managed to get a start-up package for her business; as I am talking to you her business has grown in such a way that her work is shown in magazines.”

“With the skills development projects we have different funders who will conduct activities with the women such as sewing, baking, and writing of their CVs, and after completion of the course they issue certificates. You will find that women who are new in the shelter actively participate in the project and get certificates, but the old ones get bored and don't actively participate in the project. Sometimes you get the women who are less than a week placed into jobs; they actually place them in shops or in supermarkets and so forth...”

“We have success stories of women, you know, through the skills

programmes they were empowered, grew and managed to stand up on their own. I have the other one that I really like, this woman started selling old clothes that are given as gift to the shelter for women to can raise funds. The skills development programme allows women to develop confidence first and make sure that they can stand on their own. Once their confidence has been developed and they are equipped with skills to can start to organised their lives. They learn skills that will enable them to be economically stable so they can look after themselves.”

According to the Department of Social Development Strategy for Sheltering Services (2013 - 2018), the skills development programmes rendered in the shelters are aimed at empowering abused women, especially because they have been socially and economically disadvantaged and have been unfairly prejudiced in our society because of gender-based violence and stereotyping. In addition, programmes for skills development and support to emerging female entrepreneurs need to be more strongly supported, as well as the development of a new generation of expanded public works programmes (EPWPs) to include training beyond that which is currently available, to be co-facilitated and integrated (City of Johannesburg Women Development Strategy, 2005 - 2010). Although the main problem confronting these women is domestic abuse, their often dire situation is exacerbated by being unemployed, semi-skilled or unskilled, which renders them financially dependent on their partners.

Another challenge is that they are often a long distance from family, friends, and the community, which adds to their vulnerability. Assistance in skills training would help to provide survivors with a lifeline to break the cycle of abuse and gain their financial independence. The organisation People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA) (2017) in their booklet outlining their services and goals, state that survivors of abuse will be empowered, and afforded an opportunity to start their own businesses and compete fairly in the job market. Women can also be trained in artisan skills so that they can venture into building construction and maintenance.

Subtheme 3.4: Other programmes such as skills training in sewing, baking,

cooking, and other community-based programmes

Participants referred to other programmes that they offer abused women, funded by donors, such as training in sewing, manicures, and hair-plaiting techniques. They conceded that some of these skills training exercises are somewhat basic since they do not have accredited skills training programmes; however, these techniques do assist many women who exit the shelters in acquiring skills which would enable them to survive once they have become reintegrated into the community. The participants had the following sentiments to share about different skills training offered:

“Skills training such as sewing skills project, manicure, hair-plaiting techniques. Most of the skills development, we are dependent from the Department of Community Safety and Department of Social Development for funding for those projects. Recently the Department of Social Development have sent some of the women to another skills development programme from the community-based care programme, which is very “nice” (means good) because some of them were able to get a chance to be trained to care for the grannies in the home based care programme.”

“The security training, sewing groups as well, you know, it’s so strong...Orange Day Campaign and with the Edcon. You know it really equipped women as well, and we are still moving with it because from that project I ensured that there’s staff members so that we ensure that we retain the skill and still have it here. So you’ll find that we still getting orders and we have noticed our women are good with ironing and stitching, umm, through that programme each one who participated got a machine they are doing excellent, they are so impressive, initially we started with patching, but now it’s not even patching because they even went for training three months, as the winning group they are starting further to do the designing part of it.”

“We teach them to manage finances at the basic level. This is done through the project that the Department of Social Development introduced for

shelters. We have success stories that were taken through other projects that dealt with hair and beauty training, then we notice that they have different preferences and potential. We then analysed their needs and the different skills they have. Women do come to the shelter with different skills that are not activated, hence when they are at the shelter you will notice that this one loves knitting, this one she's into hair and they sometime plate their own hair. So it depends who are there at the shelter at that time; we had success stories of two women who were trained and given start-up capital."

Tengland (in Helmersson & Jönson, 2015) suggests that the help seeker should be treated as an expert on her own life, aligned with aspects that have been identified as pivotal for empowerment to shift the balance of power and minimise the power of the helper. In acquiring the necessary resources and increasing their self-confidence, it is possible to release the intrinsic power that is necessary to take control of their own lives.

According to Ekstrom (2016), empowerment focuses on social change such as women finding the way out of poverty, prostitution, violence, and human trafficking. Helmersson and Jönson (2015) describe empowerment as a tool for individual change rather than collective action; they also link power relations to social change. Contrary to expectations, empowerment is not necessarily associated with problematic power relations and difficulties in merging a non-directive approach with professional responsibilities. Yadav (2000) defines empowerment in terms of "access to knowledge and resources as well as individuals or groups to have greater control over their circumstances that influence their lives and free them from shackles imposed on them by custom, beliefs and practices" Mhango (2012) refers to empowerment as a process that seeks to inspire women as a vulnerable group with the courage to break free from the patterns of abuse and maltreatment by their partners. This is done through the dissemination of information and the development of skills such as negotiation and decision making.

Subtheme 3.5: Community-oriented programmes

Participants reported that one of their interventions is community work in schools, churches, clinics, and during community events; and that social auxiliary workers and volunteers perform these tasks. They do awareness raising about the shelter and the services they render. The above sub-theme is highlighted in the following story lines:

"We conduct workshops and awareness campaigns in schools and in communities. The workshops are done three times in a week by the social auxiliary workers, and then at the communities maybe once a month."

"The social auxiliary workers has been trained to do the advocacy function as well as running the 365 Days of Activism on No Violence Against Women and Children activities in partnership with othe stakeholders in the communities."

"We do education and awareness programme at the clinics, hospitals, shopping malls, and taxi ranks. Sometimes we are invited to participate in the events and we exhibit the work that women produce during the craft programme, and talk about the services we offer in the shelter, but we keep the physical address of the shelter very confidential, the public education and awareness activities are done for two weeks in a month and it is a standard programme that is run by the social auxiliary workers and volunteers."

Slabbert and Green (2013) claim that community work as a social work method could be used to create awareness of the devastating effect that domestic violence has on women, children, families, communities, and society. A whole range of role players could assist in creating this awareness, for instance churches, the police, schools, community leaders, and different welfare organisations. "Community outreach" was described by some of the participants as a means of ensuring that such accessibility occurs. "Community work" was referred to in the sense that it is not funded by the state, and as such is indirectly seen as part of Department of Social Work (DSW); but interestingly, it was not immediately identified as being central to DSW methodology (Patel & Hochfeld, 2012).

Developmental social welfare service delivery requires service providers and practitioners to implement interventions that target communities in such a way as to maximise the impact of that delivery. The changing environment within which social welfare services are rendered as well as the diversity and complexity of the needs of communities call for the integration of practice models by social service practitioners (Department of Social Development Framework for Social Welfare Services, 2013).

Category 3.5.1: Income-generating programmes

The participants had the following to say about income-generating projects run by the shelters: Even though shelters do not have the requisite funding for income-generating programmes and some of their programmes are not registered or accredited, shelters nevertheless manage to equip women with a number of basic income-generating skills. For example, some house mothers and volunteers provide basic training in cooking, baking, and sewing, and in some shelters women are equipped with the means to bake fat cakes, which they sell in the community.

One of the respondents in Patel's (2012) research findings claimed that social workers and welfare organisations do not always understand or relate to the concept of economic development. There appears to be a limited understanding of the social investment role of the state in social security, care services, and social service interventions that build human capital. Micro-economic development interventions also feature prominently in discussions, particularly in regard to developing sustainable income-generating projects. This is supported by the following utterances made by the social workers:

“Some of our ladies have been involved in the EDCON programme that was introduced to us by the Department of Social Development. They started with training during the 16 Days of Activism programme, promoted to cutting and doing minor stitches. Hey! Now they have been promoted to do designing. I am happy to say five ladies are in the advanced stages and are linked to companies where they are doing internship and they are being

paid. Once they completed the internship they will be permanently employed by different companies.”

“And we have skills development programme that we offer them such as sewing, computer lessons, and...gardening. Last year on Mandela Day we used our 67 minutes for all of us to do gardening. It was nice and it showed them that gardening contribute to the healing process and it is not for me but can be done by anyone because many believe that it is the work of men only. We allowed beneficiaries to sell the vegetables we got from the garden so that we can buy bread, food, and toiletry. We managed to raise funds from churches, shops, and community members out of the vegetables.”

Poulin (2005), Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2009); and Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney, Strom-Gottfried, and Larsen (2010) perceive empowerment as a process of increasing personal, interpersonal, or political power so that individuals can take action to improve their life situations. The participants believed that beneficiaries “were reluctant to participate in income-generation programmes because they had become dependent on [state social assistance] grants.” Simultaneously, participants were also concerned about how to shift service delivery from a passive approach to an active approach to social welfare; therefore, words such as *self-reliance* and *independence* featured strongly in the lexicon of the participants (Patel & Hochfeld, 2012).

By increasing women’s income-generating capacity, service providers will in a sense enable these victims to be decisive in ending an abusive relationship and working towards their financial independence. Pickup (2001) states that using income-generating projects as a strategy for combating violence is based on a belief that if women earn money, this will shift the patterns of household decision making. Furthermore, economic empowerment is believed to lead to a change in gender relations within the household, including the woman’s raised status within the household, and particularly in the relationship with the husband/partner.

Category 3.5.2: Awareness campaigns

Participants reported that they do participate in the planning and implementation of 365 Days of Activism awareness campaigns on violence against women and children. During these campaigns social workers are afforded an opportunity to talk to community members, and liaise with other stakeholders from other non-governmental organisations and government departments. The participants had the following to share with regard to awareness campaigns:

“We conduct workshops where we do educational and awareness on gender based workshops on how to get out of abusive relationships...”

“At schools we do workshops, and awareness campaigns we do in communities. The workshops are done three times in a week by the social auxiliary workers...at the communities maybe once a month; that’s why I was saying to you the most challenge that we facing in our organisation there is...”

I think you know the Orange Day Campaign...You know it really equipped women as well, and we are still moving with it because from that project I ensured that there’s staff members so that we ensure that we retain the skill and still have it here.”

According to the United Nations Handbook for Legislation on Violence against Women (2010), awareness campaigns are critical in exposing and articulating the unacceptability of and zero tolerance towards violence against women. The promotion of women’s human rights, emphasis on societal condemnation of discriminatory attitudes which perpetuate violence against women, and the stigmatisation of complainants/survivors of violence should be addressed. An awareness campaign is also an important tool in keeping female complainants/survivors informed about their rights, and about the existing laws and remedial action. In many countries, non-governmental organisations play a key role in raising awareness of the unacceptability of violence against women, especially through broad coalition building and effective public and media outreach. Moeketsi (2013) maintains that promoting awareness and advocacy programmes to raise issues that affect victims of abuse, are important preventative and intervention measures.

Integrated workshops which involve all stakeholders in educating communities on issues that affect them should be factored into the equation.

Subtheme 3.6: Help with legal procedures

Participants reported that abused women are from time to time transported to the courts where they can apply for protection orders and open cases with the SAPS. Participants also indicated that some abused women are referred to legal aid service providers for processing divorce decrees, while others receive legal information from paralegal officials pertaining to their cases. This is supported by the following accounts:

“We also receive cases that comes through the court process, they have opened cases and have a case numbers; if not, we check with them whether they want to open a case, we take them to SAPS, from there we wait for the investigating officer. We provide court support, accompany them to court.”

“Allowing to open cases and apply for protection orders empowers them, especially when they had fear of confronting their perpetrators. We also educate them on different forms of abuse and you will find that others were not even aware that they were abused. We also have life skills programmes where we educate them about parenting, communication skills, and equip give them with tips of how to protect their belongings and themselves during the abusive relationships, especially important ones such as IDs and birth certificates.”

“Women do benefit from the paralegal service that they access free of charge from ADAPT organisation. I say this because they do get advises, guidance, and support. Some of the women are legally represented through the legal aid board service that we refer them to.”

Women who turn to the legal system do so either to seek the protection of the court to prevent further violence or for retribution and justice after violence has taken place. Offenders are also brought before the courts when violence has driven their

victims into taking desperate measures (Dangor et al., 2000). Women's legal needs extend beyond a protection order, maintenance, divorce, and custody of children (Bhana, Vetten, Mkhunga & Massawe, 2012). The Domestic Violence Act (Act 116 of 1998) stipulates that "any member of the South African Police Service must, at the scene of an incident of domestic violence or as soon thereafter as is reasonably possible or when the incident of domestic violence is reported, render such assistance to the complainant as may be required in the circumstances, including assisting or making arrangements for the complainant to find a suitable shelter and to obtain medical treatment" (Kurst-Swanger & Petcosky, 2003; Harne & Radford, 2008).

Activists within the domain of violence against women argue that unless the state takes positive action and directs resources to building shelters, providing victim advocates, building houses, making streets safer, and training law enforcement personnel to impose the rights which ostensibly protect women from violence, legislation which is assumed to protect victims of abuse will remain empty shells and will not benefit abused women (Dangor et al., 2000). Currently, significant gaps continue to exist between international standards – which are endorsed by the government, and national laws and policies – and the dangers that women and children face daily. The challenge is to translate these standards into action; end discrimination against women and girls; create gender equality; develop and empower women; and to improve education, health, and the economy at local level; and to fully confront the problem and its underlying causes with the necessary political commitment, accountability, and resources (South African Integrated Programme of Action, 2013 - 2018; United Nations Children's Fund, 2011).

Subtheme 3.7: Reintegration/reunification programmes

Most of the participants indicated that a reintegration/reunification programme plays an important role in the preservation of the family; that this programme is

implemented strictly by the social worker; and that an assessment of both women's readiness and a favourable environment for placement should be executed properly to achieve success. The participants had the following to say about reintegration programmes:

"Reintegration start when she is admitted at the shelter. In fact when they come to the shelter I make them aware that shelter it's not a permanent place to stay at some point they will have to exit. Some of them they've got children they need to be taken care of. We assist them to apply for the grant so that children can be supported through it. But in most cases family remain a support system that they have, but others we support them when they want to start their own family."

"When you do the reintegration programme, you start by preparing the women during the counselling session that there is a time when they will have to go out of the shelter and continue with their lives; shelter is not a permanent place but short term accommodation. Both of you develop an independent development plan and care plan that says how you planning the journey of the the person, including dealing with the abuse issues and going back to the family or community. The process of preparation for exit first allow them to go home over weekends and then we can accompany them or we can call family members to come and have a family session with them, and then afterwards we then do a home visit with them or without them. Afterwards they would visit home once a week and then adjust to the situation, and We seldom do home visits to check if they are still okay because of limited capacity and resources."

"Reunification programme starts on the day when we start the counselling session, we firstly have to develop the Individual Development Plan (IDP) and the Care Plan (CP) for the client. Both these plan we draw a map for both of us of how are going to go this journey of healing and exit. The client has to give you exactly what she want to happen. In that process you

indicate to her that her time of stay is 3 to 6 months and we have to work around that time doing everything else.”

Reunification plays an important role in restoring broken relationships between family members who have been institutionalised and their biological families. Kang (2008) defines reunification as a planned process in which children under institutional care or living on the streets are reunited with their families or community by transitioning from street life or life under institutional care to family life or community life with social norms and values. According to the Children's Act (2005), the social worker who facilitates the reunification process must conduct an assessment of the circumstances of the family prior to removal of the abused child, and formulate strategies to avoid the recurrence of problems once the child is reunified with his/her family.

The aim of this level of service delivery is to enable service beneficiaries to regain self-reliance and optimal social functioning in the least restrictive environment possible. It facilitates reintegration into family and community life. It also refers to the building of optimal self-reliance and social functioning of those in residential care (Department of Social Development Framework for Social Welfare Services, 2013).

3.7 THEME 4: PARTICIPANTS REPORTED A VARIETY OF CHALLENGES RELATED TO THE WORK IN SHELTERS

Although participants acknowledged the potential empowerment effect of programmes, they also reported the following challenges which hamper the effective implementation of these programmes.

Subtheme 4.1: Women returning to the perpetrators – reinforcing the cycle of abuse

Participants reported that at times they felt that their intervention in the lives of the abused women were ineffective, especially when women returned to the perpetrators due to circumstances beyond their control, and because they were emotionally and economically dependent on their abusive husbands or partners. The following story lines expressed the challenges as faced by the social workers:

“This “lady” (means abused women) was actually sold by her father to the father’s friend and then she had to now date his father’s friend and she is still dating him; the reason why she came to the shelter it’s because her father’s friend was beating her up...she actually went back to that relationship so even if I do home visit to check she pretend to be doing well, she will just say she is coping and, but she is really not coping well.”

“It is difficult and very complex to provide a comprehensive social support services to abused women because the period of stay is short term. Sometimes you don’t complete the full intervention on the individual because they have to exit the shelter as it is a temporal shelter; it’s not permanent; at the end of the day she needs to be reintegrated to the community so if nobody is willing to help, you find that sometimes even this women doesn’t have means of survival which then most of the times they go back to the abusers because they depend on them.”

“You trying to empower this person to be individual, for this person to say no, enough it’s enough, so some of them do not allow them to change their perspective of abuse because they know anyway that they are going back, so at the end of the day they keep coming back. The same women will again come back for help, so those are the challenges you encounter; and some of them they don’t even want to open a protection order.”

Impoverished women are not easily able to leave abusive relationships once they are caught up in the cycle of violence since this cycle is often controlled by economic considerations. These women have nowhere else to go and have no means of support outside the context of abuse (Dangor et al., 2000). Despite the negative impact violence has on women, it is unfortunate that they rarely spontaneously reveal their situation as they may be ashamed or fear that the service provider may not believe them, or blame them for the violence. Similarly, women do not speak out for fear that their husbands may be jailed, which would cause further financial hardship (Ringheim, & Murphy, 2001). Rasool (2016) argues that a lack of knowledge as to the existence of shelters is a serious hindrance to

women who wish to leave abusive relationships. Dangor et al., (2000) contend that the cycle of leaving and returning to an abusive partner does not reflect failure on the part of the shelter staff or inconsistency on the part of the battered woman, but that it is a process that culminates in the woman eventually leaving. Most of the shelter residents in their study lacked independent economic resources, with over 33% working in their homes without pay, nearly 50% unemployed and looking for work, and 48.3% already on social assistance at the time that they entered these shelters (Tutty, 2006). Bhana et al., (2012) argue that shelter skills development programmes that are offered in the shelters are not very effective in assisting women in securing employment.

Subtheme 4.2: Some women are not motivated to take part in programmes

Participants believe that they can do more to empower abused women to take control of their lives, but they cannot coerce anyone to participate in activities or programmes that are meant to contribute to bringing change in their lives. Participants had these disappointments to share:

“Some women are just homeless they just want a place to stay for free, eat for free and don't want to be empowered.”

“Some of the cases are complex; it's like I said earlier, these women do not want to open up, or others do open up but somewhere somehow when you trying to help this person comes with new stories. This is really confusing because at the end of the day you don't even know if you going forward or backward, so that how complex they become...”

“You admit a women only to find out that they not even in an abusive relationship but she just heard from a friend because you know when you at the shelter some of the skills that we empower them with its saving up money because we want them at the end of the day to be self-reliant not to rely on someone else; so some of the skills that we give them is that now that you are at the shelter if you are working at least save because the only thing that they buy at the shelter is their toiletries; food is provide so at least

now they able to save; so you find out that they only came to the because they heard from the friend.”

Dangor et al., (2000) assert that shelter workers at times encounter manipulative women; while stories may vary, these women typically lie about their situations, manipulate shelter workers, create security risks, and generally cause trouble. One shelter worker reported that she was obliged to ask a client to leave the shelter after she refused to participate in activities; another woman brought her husband to the shelter to share in the benefits offered. According to Tutty (2006), most women either do not seek assistance or find that the support offered does not meet their needs.

One woman claimed that domestic violence is now such a common occurrence that it has actually become an impediment to the victim; public attitudes towards women who remain with their abusive partners demonstrate less compassion; that these women must be either foolish or irrational. The shame of being victimised therefore continues to be a barrier that prevents women from seeking either formal or informal support. The support groups, or growth circles as they have become known, were proposed as one strategy for women to develop support networks to help them through difficult times and social isolation. Through support groups, women could connect with others who had left abusive partners. The expectation was that women would build relationships that would be sustained outside the group environment (Tutty, 2006).

Subtheme 4.3: Referring agents not adhering to admission criteria – “dumping” women

Participants reported that some stakeholders from the SAPS and DSD do not adhere to the admission criteria of the shelters. Stakeholders arrive at the shelters with women who do not meet the criteria, they will negotiate for overnight accommodation, and promise to collect the women the next day and place them appropriately. Needless to say, they mostly renege on their promises.

The participants had the following to share about the referral system in the shelters:

“Dumping of homeless women by social service practitioners from DSD or Police at the shelter happens, regardless of procedures for referral and admission criteria that are in place.”

“Sometimes you get cases of destitute women from social service practitioners from DSD, and they dump clients with us because they know we don’t take destitute women...Let’s say it’s a case of somebody who comes from Eastern Cape, she doesn’t have money, the person is willing to go home, she doesn’t have money to go home, and then they plead with you to keep this client for two weeks, but after two weeks its your case now, because the referral officer will not come back.”

“On the other hand police officers also brings clients who are not target group for the shelter, sometimes they would even take a person that they know very well that does not meet the shelter criteria, maybe is a person who has mental challenge issues but not an abused woman. ”

The criteria for admission to shelters for abused women are usually based on well-reasoned arguments, past experiences, and/or limited resources. One shelter director explained that the needs of destitute and homeless women are very different from the needs of abused women (Dangor et al., 2000).

Referral to relevant services and programmes is crucial as it builds trust and confidence in the social welfare service delivery system. Protocols and documents for all forms of referral should be developed and captured as part of a national information system (database) to increase the operational efficiency of the system (Department of Social Development Framework for Social Welfare Services, 2013).

On the other hand, Mathews (in Leburu, 2015) contends that most South African police stations lack facilities for private consultation, trauma rooms, or Thuthuzela Centres. As a result, victims of sexual violence (mostly women) often have to provide statements in environments that are not conducive to confidentiality or privacy. Most programmes implemented by women's groups, pressure groups which are faith-based including those spearheaded by both men and women, and

the government have for many years attempted to address violence against women in South Africa. Many of these are small-scale programmes, inadequately resourced, and operated in isolation on a piecemeal basis, and cannot easily be upgraded (WHO, 2002).

Subtheme 4.4: Lack of networking with other professionals, causing several challenges

Participants commented that they do not have the facilities to network with other professional to discuss difficult or complex cases, or to compare and ensure that their interventions are effective; this also has a negative effect on their professional growth and development.

Category 4.4.1: Networking for effective communication and intervention

Participants were unanimous in their view that networking plays a very important role in communication. They believe that through networking abused women can receive comprehensive support services and adequate information, and can be properly referred. Only shelter managers have access to networking platforms, and social workers feel that comprehensive service delivery is thus compromised. Some reported that networking for the development of their profession is critical. The participants shared the following sentiments:

“Networking is one of the most difficult thing that we experience especially with referring some of the clients it becomes easy if all stakeholders come together to assist this particular person.”

“You’ll find a social worker from the social development department who can assist you and even give your client food parcel, because you cannot just go and dump them there and add them as a burden; at least there’s a food voucher for them to contribute to this new environment and it will help them settle at least for this particular period. It does help a lot and you can see there is much effort that is put by us to place that person and the family there, then they’ll realise that this person won’t be a burden because at least social workers have done so much.”

Placement at a woman's shelter requires a decision by a social worker, authorised by the appropriate authority/department. Others have special support centres for domestic violence, in certain instances with the cooperation of municipalities, where women can access various forms of support without the approval of an authoritative party (Ekstrom, 2016). The creation of NPO forums to promote knowledge and resource exchange, including mentoring and coaching, was also recommended (Patel & Hochfeld, 2012). A strong network of NGOs, social services, and community-based organisations working in all these areas is the best way to ensure the best services for abused women (Dangor et al., 2000). According to Ekstrom (2016), irrespective of the kind of organisation or the degree of specialisation of local social services, social workers do cooperate with others, both within and outside their own ambit. In social services which are characterised by an integrated approach, social workers from different departments might, for example, meet the abused woman together at the first meeting. In the interviews participants used descriptions such as "co-investigating" in describing these collaborative meetings. In municipalities where the work is parallel, such as silos, the social workers emphasise confidentiality between departments. They have little insight into other departments' routines, and cooperation regarding individual clients rarely occurs.

Category 4.4.2: The lack of networking for helping foreigners

Participants believe that networking goes beyond local, provincial, and national collaboration, but should involve the SADC and international stakeholders, through the various embassies. According to some participants, shelters experience considerable challenges in communicating with female foreign nationals, and that shelters are responsible for transporting these abused women back to their countries of origin. Participants shared the following thoughts:

"There are challenges that we've got especially with the foreign nationals. We need more interpreters for communication purposes. Without proper communication it is difficult to assist them, because they do not have correct documentation hence some don't want even to participate in the skills development programme. So it's difficult because you have to spend

more time assisting them to fix that area of their lives and also mobilising International Organisation or Embassies or whoever that needs to be brought into assisting that particular client for them to be assisted.”

“So networking its extremely important it’s just that we find it difficult especially within scope of women and children...we’ve got many women that comes from Zimbabwe, Congo etc., so we need support from different Embassies and for them to understand the magnitude of violence and crime against women and children in the country.”

Tutty (2006) contends that shelter personnel are well aware of the importance of providing appropriate services to diverse client groups. For immigrant and refugee women, however, the isolation engendered by abuse is compounded by language and cultural barriers, racism, and the fact that many immigrant and refugee women are far from their friends and extended families. Without a good grasp of English, French or a local African language, it is very difficult for immigrant women to be aware of services such as shelters for abused women. Another difficult issue is that when the sponsor is the abuser, a woman could be deported. Participants claim that this has in fact occurred in several instances (Tutty, 2006). Non-governmental organisations that provide services to abused women have found themselves accommodating female foreign nationals who are not in possession of valid documentation, and they are expected to assist them with social support services, acquire the correct documentation, and provide protection from the abusers (Groenewald, 2015).

Category 4.4.3: Networking for security and resources related to human trafficking and effective help to women

Weitzer (in Groenewald, 2015) asserts that the search by vulnerable people, including victims (women and children) of human trafficking as well as foreign nationals for improved socioeconomic conditions, would be assisted by the availability of networking across the social services domain. Many women are lured to this country based on spurious promises of a better life, but then find themselves

and their children victims of human trafficking. The participants had the following to say with regard to networking:

“Human trafficking is another programme that needs lot of funding, and strengthening of security system. This programme is a high risk programme because once you are involved with the trafficked client, your life is at risk because there are more syndicate that you are not aware of and maybe they are following you because they want their victim. The security aspect for both the victim and the social worker is very critical to be considered. Training of people to specialise in the sector is very important because there is a need of people who knows what they are doing. The Department of Home Affairs need to start working closely with the shelters to improve service delivery. I think the Department of Human Settlements is a critical role player in the sheltering services.”

Many cases of trafficking start out as an attempt to improve the living conditions of people; however, circumstances often transform those attempts into incidences of exploration and abuse (Groenewald, 2015). Nel (in Groenewald, 2015) argues that there is a need to fully understand the specific roles and responsibilities of government which, in partnership with non-governmental organisations, should protect and assist victims of trafficking; the author calls for integrated multi-sectoral services to be provided.

Emser (in Groenewald, 2015) ranks South Africa as amongst the 10 countries in Africa where human trafficking is increasing at an alarming rate, with 100 000 people reportedly being trafficked annually. A newly released database shows that the main driving factors for human trafficking in South Africa are sexual exploitation, forced labour, drugs, and the alarming new trend of parents selling their children for “adoption” by questionable individuals, or sex.

Category 4.4.4: Networking at shelter forums and judiciary systems

Participants stated that in providing services to the abused women enabled them to interact with different stakeholders, including magistrates, courts, and prosecutors.

This is highlighted in the following story lines:

“There is shelter forum structure but I do not attend it, only the shelter coordinator from the Department of Community Safety attend; she will then give feedback on what has been discussed and decisions that have been taken. I only participate in the internal structures.”

“The judiciary system, you know how sometimes the court will let the perpetrator go ...Then you notice that it’s due to bail, and they are walking already in the streets... the sentencing part but with this new law especially, you’ll find that sometimes the perpetrator is let out so easily.”

Improved collaboration and networking facilities can greatly enhance the work of South African shelters. At national and provincial levels, shelters around the country can engage in greater sharing of information, resources, and improved collaboration with government. On a local level, shelters should establish and maintain good working relations with their local schools, police stations, health care providers, welfare agencies, courts, job training agencies, and other relevant stakeholders (Dangor et al., 2000). In order to coordinate the services offered to victims and their families, it is vital that the service providers work together cohesively with a full understanding of the various roles that each service is responsible for (Mhango, 2012). In service delivery more goals are often attained when decisions are made jointly by different stakeholders (Mhango 2012). The division of labour according to expert functions is a cornerstone of the functionalism theory of service delivery, as a theory selected for this study, where each profession is expected to contribute towards a solution to the problem at hand.

3.8 THEME 5: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADDRESSING CHALLENGES

The recommendations are closely linked to the challenges participants experienced. It was clear from the data that social workers are in dire need of support in terms of supervision, debriefing, professional development, and support of other professionals whether in the shelter or in aftercare. The following subthemes emerged:

Subtheme 5.1: Human resources issues

Participants claimed that working in these shelters which provide social support services to abused women is often overwhelming and frustrating. There are limited resources that could provide a comprehensive and integrated service to these women. There is a lack of adequate staff in these shelters, and many so-called stakeholders are reluctant to get involved in providing services to the women.

Category 5.1.1: More professionals for the number of clients to be helped

Participants stated that in the provision of social support services to abused women in the shelters more intervention, beyond the serviced provided by social workers, is required. There is a need for a multidisciplinary approach to intervention. The following views were voiced by the social workers:

“We need more manpower; we also need clear communication channels between staff.”

“We need manpower or capacity almost similar to Life Line organisation here at the shelter because of the size of the shelter, we need more social workers because the numbers of the clients versus per social worker does not balance. For example, when we have sixty women, those women comes with their children...”

“We don’t have enough capacity, we just stagnant in that regard and also our own support. We do conduct individual supervisions, groups supervisions with social workers but sometimes it is not enough due to time spent. We sometime have case discussion of complex cases and the how social workers cope with those cases. I remember in the past the organization will invite the psychologist to train the social worker in terms of advance skills. We no longer have such support, so in makes work more difficult with everything that I have explained that the client are presenting so many things at once; we need more expertise in terms of understanding trauma.”

In a study conducted by Department of Labour (2008), Naidoo and Kasiram stated that social workers reported that caseloads in South Africa are generally in excess of 120 cases (compared with a maximum of 12 in the UK), leading to high levels of stress and frustration among professionals. Lombard (in the Department of Labour (2008) report argues that the vast majority of these extremely high caseloads consist of statutory work for which there is an ever-increasing demand. According to these authors, social workers within the NGO sector have to face even higher caseloads than those within the government welfare sector. This arises from a complex interplay of factors. NGOs have limited ability to refuse government referrals for fear of losing their funding subsidies.

At the same time, these institutions experience a high turnover of staff as social workers seek to move either into the government sector where workloads are not only lower, but salary packages are considerably better, or to careers in other countries outside the South African social welfare sector (Department of Labour, 2008) report. Funding limitations result in fewer staff members and other resources that are needed to serve residents. It seems that the authorities choose to maintain a professional distance from residents as part of a larger trend towards bureaucratisation and professionalisation in the field (Cara, 2017). However, an attempt by government to address some of the challenges is gradually taking shape, while other challenges such as staff shortage are taking rather too long to address. The availability of more staff will strengthen the prevention of violence against women and children (Mhango, 2012).

Category 5.1.2: Supervision for social workers

Participants regard supervision as a critical aspect in the successful provision of social services. They reiterate that from their respective, shelter managers are non-social workers, hence the gap in supervision. They describe this deficit as a critical component which exacerbates the inadequacy of intervention. The participants stated the following in relation to the above mentioned category:

“Personally from my side and the organisation point of view, one other thing that we are lacking is supervision. Supervision, sometimes there’s cases

that you need somebody else's input or support to say okay, this is how you can intervene but because there is no supervision you don't know how to handle other cases. We are three social workers in the organisation, one working in the Thuthuzela and the other one working in the centre, and myself working in the shelter. We also have social auxiliary workers for that matter, but there's no teamwork; every one is doing their own things and sometimes with some of these cases you end up not knowing whether you going forward or backward, although we try that if you get the case that is complex you communicate with the other, but it does not help."

"We need proper debriefing and case discussion so that we can share with others when we stuck with the case and can get different opinion and ideas on how we can continue to provide effective service. I also need proper supervision which is not happening."

"Just supervision, you know, when you are being supervised you don't end up being overwhelmed or with the burnout. At least you can share with the other person the challenging information and lot of what is happening there. It will assist one not to do secondary victimisation without even realising that you are doing, and also if our managers could understand that there are boundaries and let them deal with the management part and leave me to do my social work part, and that will strengthen our working relationship."

External supervision is another factor that affects the individual social worker. An ideal situation would be if she is given the tools to both do her work and develop her skills. Access to external supervision is unequal. In some of the specialised departments for domestic violence the social workers describe regular and qualified supervision, with specialisation in domestic violence. It is described as important and worthwhile (Ekstrom, 2016). Social services staff who work as care managers are experiencing considerable changes in the nature of their work, compared with their former role as social workers. These changes are characterised by an increase in bureaucracy and a decrease in the time and effort expended in forming and working within relationships with their clients (Postle, 2001).

Supervision and supervision feedback make it possible for professionals to render quality services (Mhango, 2012). Most of the participants reported that there is a need for supervision to assist them in dealing with complicated cases and improving service quality. Supervision is vital for programme facilitators to ensure growth and support for social workers and quality services for clients (Austin & Hopkins, 2004; Cousins, 2004; Healy, 2004; Brink, 2006; Corey & Corey, 2007). The ability of coordinators to provide educational, supportive, and administrative supervision for service providers at implementation level will enhance effective service provision to abused women.

Category 5.1.3: Professional development programmes

According to Dangor et al. (2000), ongoing training and staff development are necessary to ensure that staff can provide the best care for shelter clients. Training VEP project managers and their staff is vital as this will facilitate insight into the programme (Mhango, 2012). Participants mentioned that not everyone receives training from their organisation for their own personal development, but that capacity building and training are always organised by the Department of Social Development. The participants had the following to say in relation to professional development programmes:

“We need ongoing training with regard to trauma counselling, training related to intervention with mental illness cases, especially with identification and referral. Currently that’s my pressing need, I need to learn more about mental illnesses because we are not in a space to diagnose bipolar clients, though you can see that we receive clients that has such problems; you can see that from nowhere the “weather” (person is not normal anymore) changes.”

“The other need is debriefing sessions; we don’t have enough debriefing sessions. I think that’s something that is of a concern for not getting debriefing sessions, and also some time off...it doesn’t make sense in how social workers, especially in shelters, operates because if I am drained or exhausted, like right now I feel like I am already having a burnout.”

“Trainings and professional developments which enriches social workers; not just social workers but even other staff members because you’ll find that as they are in the shelter they also interact with the women so they also need communication skills training; training should be provided for different level to promote effective communication, basic counselling skills such as listening, basic containment so that we make sure that we render the basic care and support because they spent time interacting with the women on various times.”

Capacity training and personal development for service providers and consumers are mainly facilitated and offered by the Department of Health and Social Development at all levels of service delivery. This is done through direct service by the department or through outsourcing to accredited service providers in the field of domestic violence, crime prevention, skills development, and project management (Mhango, 2012). Rasool (2016) maintains that it is also important that social workers and mental health professionals receive training in the detection of and appropriate intervention in domestic violence situations, so that when women do reach out to them, they receive appropriate help.

According to Ekstrom (2016), in order for social workers to increase their competence is another prerequisite for becoming a specialist. The amount of training the social workers have received during their current position varies. Some have had virtually no training at all besides what they had received during their studies in the social sciences; after having been hired, they have only had brief opportunities such as one-day conferences arranged by the organization management. Mhango (2012) asserts that social workers are trained by various institutions, probably because the VEP is regarded as a specialised field in the Department of Health and Social Development.

The provincial and district coordinators are expected to ensure capacity development for service providers. It is essential that the health services be kept abreast of VEP training and other gender-based issues to enable a comprehensive and integrated service to abused women. Professionals and non-professionals are

capacitated with training pertaining to violence against women. Training is directed at increasing an understanding of the problem of violence against women. The training should include providers in the health, education, social development, safety and security, criminal justice sectors as well as people in personnel management positions (Mhango, 2012).

Category 5.1.4: Attention to working conditions of social workers

Most participants reported that their working conditions are appalling and they do not have tools of trade. According to Dangor et al. (2000), shelter workers tend to work the longest shifts for the lowest wages. These social workers experience the greatest exposure to severely traumatised individuals, with little time off and minimal support, and they can, and do, suffer serious after effects as a result. This emanated from the following comments:

“Many of us are not motivated to do our work effectively due to appalling working conditions. We do not get adequate remuneration but we work long hours, we do not have tools of trade such as office space, telephone, computer and transport. Hence our movements are limited. We try on a monthly basis to reward ourselves by recognising our birthdays and celebrate. This is the initiative of the staff to keep them going. We don’t do staff outings because of the small budget that we receive.”

“Government to put more money to NGOs programmes because they are doing a lot and they don’t have adequate budgt to can do full operational services to the abused women and the communities at large. We don’t get enough salary compare to government officials. That is why you see many social workers leave the NGOs for government post.”

“Increase the salary of social workers that are working for the NGOs. Currently, there is high staff turnover in the NGO sector due to the fact many social workers are joining the government departments for greener pastures. Remember in the NGO sector there are limited or no benefits.”

Civil society organisations should maintain their autonomy and independence from

the state; yet, at the same time, they should be collaborative partners. Together with the other partners, they should strive to ensure the provision of comprehensive, integrated, sustainable, and high-quality social welfare services to help reduce vulnerability and poverty and to create an enabling environment for sustainable development in partnership with those committed to building a caring society. A funding model is therefore needed that maximises the collaborative contributions to this mission (Department of Social Development: Framework for Social Welfare Services, 2013).

According to Earle (2007), the working conditions of most social workers in the welfare sector in South Africa, regardless of whether they are based within the public or private arenas, are generally inadequate. Social workers are frustrated with the overwhelming needs of the community in relation to their own relatively low numbers and their limited (or lack of) access to resources such as adequate supervision, stationary, office space and furniture, information technology, administrative and language support, vehicles, supporting professionals, and institutions such as places of safety.

Subtheme 5.2: Physical resources

Participants mentioned that shelters do not have access to vehicles to transport women to different areas to access services such as clinics, courts, and police stations. Participants alluded to the fact that in many instances social workers have to compromise transporting the women because of other competing demands in the running of the shelters. The participants had the following frustrations to share:

“We have one car for all of us for all the work that we do, and let’s say there are women that need to go to the hospital and others need to go to court at the same day and at the same time there is a need to transport children to school, but due to lack of resources, other women appointment will have to be postponed for another day. Sometime we wish that finders can understand that the work that we are doing is stressful and complex, we need more human and capital support to can be effective in delivering our work.”

“Basically need equipment such as computers because we need lot of correspondence through emails, we need telephones because one don’t function properly without airtime and especially when using your own phone for work purpose. We also need petty cash to can effectively conduct our operational stuff as an organisation...We need financial support and translators and assisting with transportation of the foreign women who do not qualify to have legal documentation, back to their countries of origin.”

Due to a lack of sufficient funds all expenses at the shelter are currently limited to what is urgently required for the basic day-to-day running of the shelter. They keep costs low by doing without other necessary items (Bhana et al., 2012) such as transport to conduct visits to service beneficiaries and to attend to other tasks (Dangor et al., 2000).

Subtheme 5.3: Space and aids for professional interviews

During the interviews with the social workers at the shelters, it was clear that some of them do not have separate offices but have to share office space with other colleagues such as social auxiliary workers and volunteers. Some participants have small offices that do not allow for any privacy; and they have to be creative in making space for privacy and confidentiality. The participants had the following challenges to share:

“Office space, we are sharing the office and when there is a client for counselling the social auxiliary worker and the house mother have to leave the office.”

“Maximise resources for the social worker in the sheltering services. Tools of trade such as laptops, offices, phones, cars.” “We need adequate resources, I mean tools of trade for me to do my work professionally.”

For their effective functioning, certain basic infrastructure and equipment are needed by social welfare service practitioners, particularly social workers who are legally obliged to provide services in a prescribed manner. Failure to do so renders them liable for disciplinary action. Infrastructure required includes office

accommodation that is accessible, allows for confidentiality, protects the safety of practitioners, and facilities care (e.g., children's homes, places of safety, homes for the aged) and service centres, which can be established by the state; are managed either by the state or outsourced to non-governmental institutions or the private sector (Department of Social Development Framework for Social Welfare Services, 2013). There is a need for furniture suitable for conducting interviews with service beneficiaries, and communication equipment such as telephones and facsimile machines, computers, and photocopiers as well as filing cabinets for the safekeeping of confidential records (Dangor et al., 2000).

Subtheme 5.4: The need for effective aftercare services

These services are applicable to individuals who have been discharged from residential care facilities, alternative care, and correctional service facilities. The success of reintegration and aftercare services depends on the availability and willingness of families and communities to receive and support individuals who are being reintegrated (Department of Social Development Framework for Social Welfare Services, 2013). Most participants reported that due to limited resources such as staff and cars, they find it difficult to conduct home visits, which is part of their aftercare services and this is supported by the following story lines:

“We do have linkages with IDT and NYDA who runs programmes which places women in job opportunities and they get a stipend, which starts from R1000.00 to R1500.00 and they can save that money...we can find them a place at low-cost housing and then they can actually live from the money that they received from IDT or NYDA projects; and we sometimes try and find them jobs like cleaning jobs and then they can actually look after themselves and they will decide for themselves if it's really important for them not to go back or, but it takes a little bit of time before they chose to come; but I will call for three months because some you will find that we still need to give them food parcels, so we do that for three months.”

“They chose to come but I will call for three months because some you will find that we still need to give them food parcels so we do that for three months.”

“The serious one when there is still lot of emotions, we refer to other organisations that we have links with, and we know they provide couple sessions or mediation programme in the Gauteng such as FAMSA.”

Dangor et al. (2000) claims that there is a considerable need for post-shelter care as well as for assistance in locating permanent accommodation. These services are applicable to individuals who have been discharged from residential care facilities, alternative care, and correctional service facilities. The success of aftercare services depends on the availability and willingness of families and communities to receive and support individuals who are being reintegrated (Department of Social Development Framework for Social Welfare Services, 2013).

Subtheme 5.5: More effective follow-up services

All participants indicated that their shelters follow up telephonically after women have left the shelter. They also conduct home visits to establish whether the women are coping well. A few participants said that they liaise or link with social service professionals around the areas where these women live to facilitate follow-up sessions and provide further counselling session when necessary as indicated in the following responses:

“Yes, we do make follow-ups telephonically. To those who stay around Pretoria, we go visit them. Those who are outside Pretoria, we arrange with other service providers where they will be staying to provide aftercare service.”

“We do with telephonically, especially because when they leave we try our best to link them with other existing social services nearer to where they will be staying. If there is a social worker in their area we will contact the social worker for the progress if not we will make follow-up for only three months.”

We don't do site visit due to the kind of work we do, except for that even if we want to do we do not have enough cars for that."

"We do it over the phone or if it's nearer I go and do the visit."

Follow-up care can be extended, not only by shelters, but also by families, clinics, mental health centres, schools, and other agencies involved in welfare services (Dangor et al., 2000). Exit strategies should be planned with the collaboration of service beneficiaries, bearing in mind their specific needs (Department of Social Development Framework for Social Welfare Services, 2013). Follow-up programmes (sometimes called outreach) are offered primarily to previous transition home residents who have decided to establish a life independent of their assaultive partners, although some programmes will also counsel women who have returned.

Most follow-up programmes offer services for a limited period of time, from three to 12 months. Follow-up programmes have been developed for both emergency and second-stage shelters. The follow-up worker is expected to fulfil many roles depending on the expressed concerns of the battered woman programme participant. She may be an educator, providing information on issues from woman abuse to opportunities in the community for vocational upgrading or leisure activities. She may act as an advocate with legal representatives, child welfare, or social assistance personnel (Department of Social Development Strategy for Sheltering Services, 2013 - 2018).

For instance, the YWCA Sherriff King Home in Calgary, Canada has recently changed its programmes so that the crisis counsellor who is connected to a woman in the shelter remains available to her afterwards: in effect, following her into the community. While residing in the shelter, the woman sets up meetings with her counsellor to assist with decision making about her future. After that, the crisis counsellor works with the women in the community, mostly in a group format. Workers may utilise office space in agencies or health units (Tutty, 2006)

Subtheme 5.6: Second-stage housing

Shelters make every effort to assist women in finding post-shelter accommodation. They persevere in their endeavours despite difficult circumstances, but are seldom able to meet all the legitimate needs of the abused women (Bhana et al., 2012). The capacity of shelters to assist these women after they have exited the shelter system is extremely limited; in most cases women are likely to need continued emotional support and counselling (Dangor et al., 2000).

“Department of Human Settlement is an important role player and needs to come on board to build houses for the abused women.”

“Some women do not want to go back to family (as the case I mentioned before) or some families do not to be associated with the woman anymore, or some do not have families anymore. The other challenge is the long-term accommodation that we do not have in the province; if we have they are few low-cost housing and are meant for employed women who can pay rent and have independent living.”

“The challenge is government is not taking gender-based violence serious and there is no enough money given to the NGOs to build those long-term houses for abused women, and NGOs rely on donations and Social Development funding, which is not enough. Other departments are not coming on board to build those long-term houses.”

Second-stage shelters are a relatively recent but important addition to the continuum of transition-house services. On leaving a transition house, many women continue to need safe, long-term accommodation while she and her children establish a life independent of the assaultive partner. These shelters provide women and children from particularly volatile situations with safe refuge for longer than that which is available in first-stage shelters: from six months to two years. Because the occupants pay rent, many second-stage housing units do not require extra funding from provincial/territorial governments to cover operational costs (Dangor et al., 2000).

Second-stage shelters provide longer-term accommodation (from six to 12 months) and tend to be utilised by women who have initially resided in transition homes. Accommodation is often reserved for women who have endured serious abuse and require the safety of a secure facility rather than risk being reintegrated into the community (Tutty, 2006). According to legal academic Combrinck (in the Housing Policy Review by Werksmans Attorneys, 2014), The National Housing Code does not make express provision for women who experience domestic violence (and other persons who are vulnerable due to their special housing needs). These women may, depending on their housing needs at a particular time and their own financial resources, benefit from existing housing programmes, but the availability of these programmes varies widely across provinces.

3.9 THEME 6: TEAMWORK - INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY

Participants stated that working in these shelters can be very challenging, and even though there are different shelter workers they do not collaborate and work together. Instead there is considerable interference by non-social worker staff in the private space of the abused women, which impacts the ethical tenets and confidentiality related to these clients. They stated that instead of teamwork, there seems to be an element of competition amongst staff. In most cases there is a need for role clarification as expressed in the following comments:

“Currently everybody is doing their own thing; there is no support from others...there is no teamwork; we know that social auxiliary worker are the ones that are supposed to do campaigns; they don’t want to do that; they want to do what the social worker is doing; they want to see the clients and sit down with the clients of which that’s not their line of work, so even when it comes to awareness campaigns it becomes a challenge and you cannot follow people around and its simply because there are no proper structure in place to say this is how things are done, this is your role that your role.”

“When you are in an NGO setting and the managers are not social workers sometimes they don’t understand the processes and that as a social worker you work according to the ethics and values, because sometimes the

manager would like you to inform them about the cases of the clients and you will find that it's difficult for you because you promise the client confidentiality."

"The manager of the shelter is the pastor; sometime she wants to interact with the clients and interfere with the counselling session that the social worker has started with the client, during the weekend (Saturday and Sunday) she does interact with the clients, advise them and when go deeper into counselling with the client, she cause more damage than helping the person, especially its happening during the weekend when the social worker is not available. On Monday when the social worker comes back to work you'll find that the person is miserable and you have to start again doing damage control and go along with them. The challenge is that there are no boundaries because the manager interferes with the confidential issues."

According to Ekstrom (2016), cooperation with the social workers at departments of social assistance is described as somewhat more difficult than with the child welfare departments. When the social workers feel that the woman needs to stay at a shelter or should receive social assistance or help in moving out of a shelter, it sometimes happens that those at the social assistance departments make a different assessment. The Integrated Service Delivery Model (Department of Social Development, 2006) indicates that people should connect with one another and with their environment in order to be more effective in their decision-making and planning skills.

3.10 THEME 7: FUNDING FOR EFFECTIVE SERVICES

Funding and subsidisation should be based on principles of fairness in relation to the cost of the required services. However, within a developmental paradigm non-government organisations should also embark on economic development and fund-raising initiatives to augment that which government provides (Department of Social Development Framework for Social Welfare Services, 2013). The participants had the following sentiments to share with regard to funding:

“We believe that politicians need to prioritise the needs of the abused women first and give budget and human support, because we do participate in the shelter forum and the VEP forum to share our experiences and challenges, but nothing is happening, currently funding is inadequate.”

“Organizations needs funding; currently we are struggling because of limited funding that we receive from DSD. We do not have enough cars to can do all the work effectively and at the same time transporting women to different places such as clinics, home affairs or SASSA, or even to court for that matter is a hussle. We are dependent on the finances from the Department of Social Development and when they pay late; also its another stress on its own, because sometimes organizations do stay for 3 months and more without budget and operations and other services becomes affected.”

“Funding is a challenge everywhere; the cake is too big and there are so many slices, the only thing is that of salaries; but NGOs funding if we can manage because this skills development its really through fundraising for ourselves to look for the plan to look for the fabric because it’s not something which is in our service level agreement; yet you see that it has impact on the women; we had a tender with DBS for the World AIDS ribbon and our women did them there were so nice; one lady saw our items through the sewing ladies, then she says, do you do these ribbons and said that she would like for us to do them for her also.”

Although official policies are designed to be supportive and empowering, in practice they can be experienced as restrictive and disempowering when programmes face budget shortfalls or when staff members maintain a strict relational separation and hierarchy between themselves and residents (Cara, 2017).

According to Bhana et al. (2012), funding constraints limit the ability of shelters to provide comprehensive services to women.

3.11 THEME 8: POLICY ALIGNMENT

Participants confirmed that there is alignment between government policies and that of the organisations that provide services to all shelters in South Africa. Some participants reported that shelters fall under the umbrella of faith-based organisations whose policies stipulate that they should provide services to women in crisis, including homeless women. However, the Department of Social Development is currently providing financial support strictly for abused women; assistance for homeless women is currently not part of the equation. The participants had the following to say with regard to policy alignment:

“Policies of the Department of Social Development and that of the NGOs need to be aligned especially when it comes to the target group of the shelter. The DSD policy does not allow shelters to accommodate homeless women, but others have been removed by the police from the streets and have suffered violence and crime in the streets, but the fact is that they are homeless, while there is a thin line between homeless and abused women. The policies are not talking to one another.”

“Social workers salaries must be aligned in relation to policy frameworks of the NGOs and DSD. There is a need for a standardised funding policy so that all social workers across the country earn their salaries according to same levels. es because I feel we also doing same or more work compare to other sector of government department social workers. There is a need for a fair distribution of salaries of social workers.”

“...manager is not a social worker, but supervises the social worker and interferes with the confidentiality because she wants to know more of the client’s stories. Department of Social Development’s point of view or principles is that non-social workers cannot supervise social workers, but it is different in the NGOs sector.”

“We are a faith-based organisation have, when we say women in crisis because we accommodate women in crisis, every women whether they are

homeless, whether they are abused, they are women in crisis...social development for example abused women it's an abused women so we have to accommodate women who are abused and then with us we accommodate all women who are in crisis even the homeless so we find that there is a problem (nje kuba nenkinga) when it comes to programmes that we render because are not addressing the problems experienced by the homeless.

Approximately one-third of all shelters in South Africa are affiliated with church or other religious groups. Some shelters depend on the collaboration with organisations to carry out the functions that they are unable to deal with. Bhana et al. (2012) argues that currently in the provision of the shelter services, there is no alignment between policy and programmes, and this contributes to the challenges that shelters experience.

Policies which govern the admission of abused women into shelters can either be formal or informal. In addition, upon admission shelter staff members usually employ a basic intake procedure in order to orient the women and explain the house rules. This is an essential step when admitting abused woman to a shelter as it serves to set boundaries, define expectations, and establish ground rules (Dangor et al., 2000).

According to Bhana et al. (2012), the national Department of Social Development released a policy related to the funding of services providers. The policy is based on the assumption that the department will not be the sole funder of social welfare services. Instead, non-profit civil society organisations that deliver services through securing funds from donor organisations, corporate social responsibility programmes, and sources such as the National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund (NLDTF) are expected to meet the shortfall between the cost of delivery and that which the DSD provides.

There is growing global discourse that has a considerable impact on management and leadership practices in social work as welfare organisations, and social workers are subjected to ever-increasing performance pressures, exacerbated by a

dominant deficit-based work orientation (Engelbrecht, 2010). Minister Bathabile Dlamini's Social Development Department Budget Vote speech (2016/17) on 6 May 2016 reported that the National Development Plan (NDP) calls for 55 000 additional social service professionals for the sector. She stated that the Department of Social Development will mobilise resources to ensure that the sector has the required capacity of personnel and programmes. The Minister also acknowledged the challenges in the recruitment and employment of social work graduates, and stated that these challenges arise as a result of the restrictive fiscal environment that the country is currently facing.

The Tshwaranang Legal Advocacy Centre (TLAC) Report (in Werksmans Attorneys, 2014) further notes that "currently there is no legislative provision for the regulation of South Africa's shelters for victims of domestic violence and services that they provide." In considering whether or not the DSD has a mandate to establish and/or provide funding for NPOs or other stakeholders to establish shelters, we must look beyond the existing legislation. According to Wimpfheimer (2004), for quality practice to take place in agencies today, all the competencies discussed above are required by agency managers. They are an integral part of the day-to-day and long-term management of organisations involved in providing social services of any kind. There are many other "realities" in the life of a manager that develop with on-the-job experience. Through hands-on experience both the new and experienced managers are constantly engaged in finding solutions to everyday complications.

3.12 CONCLUSION OF THE CHAPTER

In this chapter, the researcher presents an introduction, the demographic profile of the participant; and the discussions around the experiences, challenges, and recommendations of the social support services for abused women in shelters, from the perspective of social workers. The research findings are also outlined and the overview of the themes, subthemes, and categories are unpacked, supported by the data derived from the interview transcripts. All of the eight themes that emerged during the process of data analysis are explained and substantiated in detail, taking

into account the relevant literature. Some social workers described their experiences in offering social support services to abused women in shelters as challenging but also interesting; challenging in the sense that some abused women who come to the shelters have experienced intense levels of abuse, and others multiple types of abuse.

Some have barely escaped death while others bear a life-time of emotional and physical scars. Interestingly, social workers reported that they enjoy their work, and derive considerable satisfaction from seeing these women grow and develop, and empowered to reclaim their lives and regain their independence. From the data collected from the research participants, it is evident that the social support services rendered by these social workers in shelters have a significant impact on the lives of these abused women by supporting them in dealing with the after effects of abuse, restoring their self-confidence, and assisting them in becoming self-sufficient, and live independent lives, separate from their abusive partners.

Chapter 4 focuses on the summary and conclusions of the research, and also includes the findings and recommendations on the study.

CHAPTER 4

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research study was to develop an in-depth understanding of the experiences, challenges, and recommendations of social workers who offer social support services to abused women in shelters in the Tshwane and Johannesburg regions, Gauteng Province. The researcher identified the gap in the literature on the perspectives of these social workers.

4.2 SUMMARY: PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

Chapter 1: This chapter focused on the introduction and general orientation of the research study and presented an introduction, problem formulation, problem statement, motives for the study, research question, goal and objectives of the study, research approach and design, ethical considerations, significant of the study, clarification of key concepts, and the content plan of the research report.

In **Chapter 2**, the researcher discussed in more detail how the qualitative research method was employed, and the goals and objectives were formulated. The researcher followed a qualitative research approach with an exploratory, descriptive, and contextual design after gaining access to and preparing the participants. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews to collect data from the participants. In preparing for data collection, the researcher compiled an interview guide. This was administered by conducting a pilot test to assist the researcher in evaluating the relevance of the interview guide to the study. The researcher continued to describe how the qualitative methodology was employed in the study of the social support service for abused women in shelters, from the perspective of social workers.

In **Chapter 3**, the researcher provided the research findings from the 10 participants who were interviewed. The data collected was then analysed by the researcher and the independent coder. From the data analysis, eight themes,

subthemes, and categories emerged. In presenting the research findings, the researcher utilised the verbatim quotations from the transcripts.

In **Chapter 4**, the researcher presents a summary on how the goal of the research was achieved, conclusions, and recommendations based on the findings and the literature control.

4.3 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS PERTAINING TO THE RESEARCH STUDY

In this section, the researcher summarises the research methodology as designed in Chapter 1 and employed in Chapter 2 to reach the goal of the study.

4.3.1 Summary and conclusions pertaining to the research process

In answering the research question, a qualitative research approach was utilised. The study conducted by the researcher was based on the following research question:

- What are the social workers' perspectives with regard to the social support services for abused women in shelters?

The findings reflected the social workers' perspectives as interesting, overwhelming, and challenging in relation to the provision of their social support services to abused women who are broken and humiliated, have suffered mercilessly, and in many instances barely escaped death. Some of these women have psychological/ emotional and physical scars that have a long-term negative impact on their lives. Social workers were able to tell their stories in working with the abused women. They also referred to the limited resources and other challenges that contribute to the ineffective provision of social support services, and the lack of a multidisciplinary approach in the shelters which prevents women from receiving a comprehensive service.

Another challenge that they mentioned is the limited funding that shelters receive, which contribute to an inability to implement the programmes effectively. The lack of networking and teamwork exacerbates the already difficult circumstances they have

to contend with. Social workers indicated that attention has to be given to their working conditions, physical structures, low salary scale, lack of supervision, and human resources. Participants highlighted the unsatisfactory policy alignment of NGOs and the Department of Social Development.

In order to answer the above research questions, the researcher was informed by the goals and objectives of the study, set out below.

The goal of the study:

- To develop an in-depth understanding of social support services for abused women in shelters, from the perspectives of social workers in Gauteng Province.

The research objectives employed:

- To explore and describe the social support services for abused women, from the perspectives of social workers in Tshwane and Johannesburg.
- To conceptualise the social support services for abused women within the context of social development and a strength-based approach.
- To explore and describe the strengths and challenges experienced by social workers who offer social support services to abused women in the shelters in the Tshwane and Johannesburg regions, and to ascertain how these challenges can be addressed to provide effective services.
- To obtain a sample of social workers in the employ of the shelters who render services to abused women in Tshwane and Johannesburg region, Gauteng Province.
- To conduct semi-structured interviews facilitated by open-ended questions in an interview guide to explore the experiences of social workers in relation to support services rendered to abused women in the shelters in the Tshwane and Johannesburg regions, Gauteng Province.
- To sift, sort, and analyse the data obtained according to the eight steps of qualitative data analysis constructed by Tesch (in Creswell, 2009).

- To analyse and interpret the data and conduct a literature study in order to verify the data.
- To draw conclusions and make recommendations which would enhance the social support services for abused women in shelters in the Tshwane and Johannesburg regions, Gauteng Province.

The research objectives were achieved. The researcher assisted the social workers in exploring and describing their experiences in providing social support services to abused women; social workers shared their experiences and their responses were derived from their own perspectives. The researcher utilised both the social development approach and the strengths-based approach which focus on prioritising human beings as potential architects of change in their lives.

This approaches also placed an emphasis on improving the lives of the poor and other vulnerable groups, in the belief that all human beings have potential, and when their strengths and qualities are realised they can be reintegrated into the social and economic life of the community. The utilisation of the social development and strength-based approach was deemed appropriate for this study since the two approaches assisted social workers in identifying and building on the strengths and capacities of those supported by services as a means of helping them find solutions to their problems.

The researcher obtained a sample of social workers in the employ of the shelters, who render services to the abused women in the Tshwane and Johannesburg regions in Gauteng Province. She conducted semi-structured interviews which were conducive to the use of open-ended questions. This enabled social workers to talk more openly and freely about their experiences. The researcher applied her interviewing skills such as clarifying statements, summarising, and paraphrasing to assess whether she understood what the participants were saying. For example, social workers mentioned social support services that they render such as counselling, group and community work, life skills, and skills development. The open-ended questions enabled the researcher to probe further for details.

After sufficient data had been obtained the researcher sifted, sorted, and analysed it according to the eight steps of qualitative data analysis to ascertain the truth value and trustworthiness of the research question. The interviews were transcribed verbatim, using codes in the place of actual identities. The data were interpreted and managed in accordance with literature for verification. The researcher drew conclusions and made recommendations to enhance the social support services offered to the abused women in shelters in the Tshwane and Johannesburg regions, Gauteng Province.

The interview guide was used to obtain data from the social workers as service providers for abused women in shelters.

The following requests were made and open-ended question asked, formulated in accordance with the interview guide and the overall goal and objectives of the study:

- Tell me more about your experiences in offering social support services to abused women in shelters.
- Share with me the kind of social support services you offer in the shelters.
- Tell me about the challenges that you experience when offering social support services to abused women.
- In your opinion, what suggestions or recommendations do you have to improve the social support services rendered to the women accommodated in the shelters?

The following were added after the interview guide had been revised, subsequent to pilot testing:

- Share with me the kind of stories the (women) tell.
- Tell me how often you are debriefed, and how it helps.
- Tell me more about other kinds of services you offer for the abused women.

- In your opinion, what are the reasons for not having second-stage housing developed?
- Share with me how you empower the women.
- In your opinion, what makes it difficult for the organisation to monitor the women once they have exited the organisation?
- Tell me about the procedure for the referral and reintegration of women.

The researcher employed an exploratory research design and conducted semi-structured interviews to elicit more information from the social workers about the social support services they render to abused women in shelters, as little is known about these social support services. The researcher encouraged the social workers to describe their experiences from their own frame of reference, and to share their views, suggestions, and recommendations. The researcher sampled only social workers who render social support services in shelters in the Tshwane and Johannesburg regions. The research design assisted the social workers in focusing on and understanding the context of these social support services. They described what these social support services involve, and the roles they play in the lives of the abused women after exiting the system.

The researcher collected data in the field at the site where participants experienced the problem under study (natural setting). She conducted the interviews with social workers who offer social support services in the shelters. The researcher used an audio recorder to record the interviews (Chapter 1). Use of the recorder assisted the researcher in observing the participants' demeanour and their non-verbal communication. All the recordings were transcribed verbatim, which assisted the researcher in analysing the data collected (Chapter 1).

The participants were able to show the researcher their work environment and office space, and introduced her to their colleagues. Data were collected through the interviews conducted by the human instrument (researcher) rather than through inventories, questionnaires, or devices. The researcher collected the data by conducting semi-structured interviews with the participants. She was interested in

gaining first-hand experience in the social support services provided to the abused women in the shelters, the challenges they experience, and what suggestions and recommendations they put across to improve these services.

In applying qualitative research, researchers build patterns, categories, and themes by organising data into increasingly abstract units of information. The researcher applied an inductive process by working back and forth between themes and databases until a comprehensive set of themes had been established. The researcher was interested in describing the meaning and her understanding of social workers' perspectives in offering social support to abused women, and whether women actually benefit from these services. The researcher was concerned primarily with the process of studying the different experiences of the participants. She observed and listened, and attempted to understand the participants' viewpoints. She applied reflexivity throughout the study, and was constantly mindful that she was working with shelters for abused women and that her experience and knowledge could influence the process and outcome of the study. This assisted the researcher in understanding how social workers view the social support services that they render to abused women, and its context.

The researcher followed the eight steps for qualitative data analysis outlined by Tesch (in Creswell, 2009). An independent coder was consulted and consensus was reached. The data were verified (Maree, 2007) to ensure its trustworthiness. Finally, the researcher concluded that the validity and reliability of the research could be enhanced through the application of the Guba model (in Krefting 1991; 2003) (Chapter 1). Following these processes, eight themes, 20 subthemes, and 16 categories emerged, and these were used to report the research findings (Chapter 3).

The researcher applied the principles of research ethics throughout the study. Consent was given voluntarily by the participants. The researcher drafted letters to request permission, which was granted, from the Department of Social Development in Gauteng, shelter management, and the participants. A confidentiality clause was included in the consent form, and participants were

reassured that the information collected, the interview transcripts, and audio recordings would be kept strictly confidential, and that codes/letters of the alphabet would be substituted for their names. She also informed the participants that their personal details would be kept in a private lockable cabinet at home, and would not be exposed to other people or the public. However, the research results and the research report would be submitted to the supervisor.

The researcher provided thank you letters to all the social workers who participated in the study as a means of appreciation for their contribution and willingness. The researcher was conscious and mindful of the influence she may have during the research process, and adapted her position as an employee of a government department to that of a researcher. The researcher conducted debriefing with only one participant to address issues of distrust and fear. This participant did not wish her interview to be audio recorded, but the researcher allayed her fears by explaining the purpose of the recordings, that it was mainly for administrative purposes, and would be destroyed once the research report has been approved.

A summary of the themes, subthemes, and categories that emerged from the research study is presented below.

4.4 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS RELATING TO THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The following eight themes emerged from the study:

- Social workers' personal experiences working in a shelter for abused women.
- The nature of the abuse of women who come to the shelter.
- Social support services for empowering women.
- Participants reported a variety of challenges related to work in the shelter.
- Recommendations for addressing challenges.
- Teamwork - internally and externally.
- Funding for effective services.
- Policy alignment.

A summary of the themes, subthemes, and categories that emerged from the data analysis, as well as the researcher's conclusions are discussed below.

4.4.1 Theme 1: Social workers' personal experiences of working in a shelter for abused women

Some of the social workers' experiences are described below.

- Social workers consider their experiences working with victims that have lived with domestic violence difficult and challenging, in particular those women who remain in the shelters for a longer period of time.
- Participants reported that some cases are very complex and that certain women are emotionally unstable; they change their personalities and behaviour as a result of their exposure to extreme abuse, often endured for many years.
- Some social workers claimed that their experiences can be described as both good and bad; they constantly deal with abused women who have endured extreme emotional and physical abuse at the hands of abusive husbands or partners who are supposed to love and care for them. However, they do experience a sense of accomplishment when these women recover to the extent that they can be reintegrated into the community.
- Participants related that offering social support services can be overwhelming because of the complexity of some of the cases that they deal with on a daily basis.
- Other participants reported their working in the shelter as a learning experience because they meet different women who have experienced various types of abuse.
- Many social workers regard their profession as a calling, comfortable in the knowledge that they have helped someone reclaim her life. They said: "It has been bad, it has been great, and it has been awesome."

The participants were asked an opening question about their experiences in offering social support services to abused women in shelters. Some participants claimed that their experiences are interesting, in the sense that they are doing what they like most and what they have been trained for. Others stated that helping another person is very important, especially when they see how the person heals, grows, and develops. Most participants related that it is interesting and gratifying to help these abused women. This was clearly reflected in their non-verbal, facial expressions of joy. Participants pondered with sadness on the victims who have endured multiple forms of abuse, both physical and emotional, at the hands of their husbands or partners who were supposed to love and care for them. Many suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder which requires intervention by a multidisciplinary team of experts.

Other participants voiced their gratification, because in the process of providing social support services to the abused women they also gained knowledge and insight into other professions. They interact with the judiciary system, the national prosecuting authority, the police, nurses, doctors, as well as clerks of the court. Working with gender-based violence and raising awareness, they engage with the community at large in clinics, schools, and the like. Others described their work as challenging due to the limited financial and human resources allocated to these shelters. Social workers are continually confronted with the consequences of unemployment, the lack of shelter and safety, emotional trauma, and the physical scars that these abused women bear.

The researcher concluded that there is no doubt that the social workers in shelters play a crucial role in the lives and space of abused women, and that they are an important resource which members of the community need to be aware of. These shelters are sanctuaries where abused women can find protection, care and support, and where they have access to psychosocial counselling. However, these social workers are struggling to offer effective social support services due to limited human and financial resources.

4.4.2 Theme 2: The nature of the abuse of women coming to the shelter

The participants reported the following types of abuse:

- Most of the women whom they engage with in the shelters have suffered physical abuse which resulted in pain and discomfort such as hitting, hair-pulling, arm-twisting, strangling, burning, stabbing, punching, pushing, slapping, or any other rough treatment in order to exercise control over the victim.
- Social workers maintain that psychological/emotional abuse is a hidden violence which does not present with obvious, physical scars. This form of abuse occurs when a perpetrator instils fear in an individual to gain control. It includes threatening to harm the person or her family if she leaves; threatening to harm himself (a form of blackmail); threats of violence; social isolation, and verbal aggression.
- Social workers characterise sexual abuse as one of the many types of abuse that women are silent about, especially those who are in a relationship. It occurs when a person is forced to unwillingly take part in a sexual activity, touching in a sexual manner without consent (i.e., kissing, grabbing, fondling), and forced sexual intercourse
- Participants stated that women experience economic abuse; their partners control their financial resources without consent, or misuse those resources. It includes not allowing the person to participate in educational programmes; controlling the person's choice of occupation; illegally or improperly using a person's money, assets, or property; and acts of fraud and deception.

Participants pointed out that most of the abused women would have been exposed to more than one type of abuse at any given time. They also stated that the most common types of abuse that these women are exposed to are physical and emotional abuse. Other social workers indicated that some women do not realise that they are sexually or economically abused because they are either married or

cohabiting. This is due to marital and cultural beliefs that are entrenched in patriarchy; women keep silent to avoid embarrassment and blame.

Participants claim that this type of abuse is not easily recognised and is often cruel in its severity. Some indicated that many abused women do not leave the relationship in the hope that the partner or the husband will change; some have been in these relationship for more than 10 years. Participants noted that some of the abused women have learned to cope in an abusive relationship. It is therefore particularly difficult to deal with women who have come to accept this kind of behaviour as normal. Social workers have to assist these women in dealing with the emotional scars that they have had to bear for so many years, and help them perceive any kind of abuse as aberrant behaviour. Participants also indicated that the impact of abuse contributes to women not taking care of their children or themselves.

Based on the participants' responses, the different aspects of abuse have been detailed in the themes and subthemes; the researcher, however, acknowledges their interrelatedness. Taking into consideration the intensity and severity of many cases of abuse, the researcher appreciates that social workers find it difficult to work with abused women who have suffered multiple incidences of abuse and who have been in abusive relationships for prolonged periods of time.

4.4.3 Theme 3: Social support services for empowering women

The participants highlighted the following social support services for empowering women:

- Social workers referred to the nine-week healing and restorative programme that they offer to the abused women; it is an intensive programme which involves counselling, life skills, and skills development.
- Participants stated that counselling involves individual and group work as well as one-on-one counselling in order to deal with issues of emotion, esteem, and the impact of abuse in general. Group work involves interacting with other people – the women share their life experiences and accounts of

abuse with each other, and realise that they are not alone in their pain and anguish.

- Participants stated that shelters also provide spiritual support which involves devotions, prayer services, going to church, and involving motivational speakers.
- Only one participant referred to family therapy as part of their social support services in preparing women for reintegration into their families and the community.
- The life skills programme is intended to assist women to regain their independence.
- The skills development programme is offered to these women during their stay at the shelter in order to attain skills for survival beyond the shelter.
- Women are also assisted in accessing legal services.
- Community-oriented programmes which include income-generating skills and awareness campaigns are offered to equip women with entrepreneurial and vocational skills so that they can survive when they exit the shelter system.
- Reunification and reintegration programmes are provided to the women at the shelter in preparing them for exiting the system.

As mentioned above, the purpose of these social support services is to empower women to make their own decisions, regain independence, and claim back their lives. It was evident that the participants regarded the healing and restorative programme as vital. Therapeutic activities and intense trauma counselling proved to be the mainstay of the services rendered to the abused women during their stay at the shelters. Throughout all the interviews, the participants emphasised the importance of counselling in dealing with the emotions that these abused women felt they could never share with others, and which impacted their entire lives and wellbeing. Group work was also thought to contribute to the interaction process with other women, sharing life experiences, improving coping skills, and the means used by other women to deal with abuse.

Participants referred to the spiritual support programme that involves all women in the shelters, who are given an opportunity to engage in devotion and group prayer; attending church services, and attending motivational talks. Women also participate in the life skills programme to orientate and equip them with skills such as parenting, child care, health, reproduction information, and self-care. This was emphasised by participants as crucial as many women have no life skills and are dependent on others for their everyday nominal needs. Participants believed that this is the result of being treated as nonentities and having been stripped of their dignity and responsibilities of being good parents. It is believed that abused women seldom have the capacity to be mothers to their children in the true sense of the word, as they continually have to focus on the abuse meted out by their partners. While in the shelters they are being taught to be good parents to their children. They are given responsibilities to care for their children and make decision about their future.

Social workers reiterated that women do not remain in the shelters long term; they have to leave at some stage and face the world outside on their own. The skills development and income-generating programmes are therefore crucial. These skills development programmes include crafts, bead making, cooking, baking, sewing, and laundry services. They are also taught how to write their CVs, draft business plans, and practise basic financial management. Income-generating programmes involve skills such as hair dressing, manicures and pedicures, beauty therapy, and car washing. Some shelters liaise with possible external donors to fund the skills development programmes.

Participants also assist women in accessing legal procedures such as protection orders, filing for divorce, issues related to custody of their children, maintenance, and restitution. Social workers assisted by social auxiliary workers and volunteers conduct awareness campaigns about gender-based violence in schools, clinics, and the community at large. Reunification programmes commence as soon as women enter the shelter to prepare them for reintegration with their families once they exit the system. Family therapy is also an important aspect of the reunification programme. Other stakeholders play a critical role, especially social workers

employed in the Department of Social Development who arrange that families receive food parcels for three months to lessen the burden brought about by the return of the woman who has exited the shelter system. However, social workers expressed their frustration as to the lack of cooperation of some stakeholders.

Based on the information above, the researcher concluded that social workers play a critical role in the empowerment of women through their social support services; however, not all these programmes are standardised. It is clear that social workers need more support staff to assist them in rendering social service programmes, taking into consideration other related activities that they have to perform.

4.4.4 Theme 4: Participants reported a variety of challenges related to work in the shelter

The following points highlight the challenges related to work in these shelters:

- Women returning to the perpetrators – reinforcing the cycle of abuse.
- Some women are not motivated to take part in programmes.
- Programmes at some shelters are hampered by their lack of alignment with NGO and DSD policies.
- Referring agents do not adhere to admission criteria – “dumping” women.
- Lack of networking with other professionals causes several challenges.
- Networking for effective communication and thus interventions.
- The lack of networking for helping foreign nationals.
- Networking for security and resources related to human trafficking and effective help to women.
- The lack of networking facilities at shelter forums and access to judicial systems.

Participants voiced their concern that despite their efforts to empower victims through the shelter social support services, some of these women decide to return to the perpetrators, thus perpetuating the cycle of violence. Numerous women

seemingly have no interest or motivation in participating in the social support programmes such as group work and skills development to improve their desperate situation. Several participants referred to faith-based organisations which have their own policies and are mandated to offer social support services to all women in distress, including the homeless. With regard to funding, the Department of Social Development specifically focuses on the plight of abused women; hence the conflict in the implementation of policies.

Social workers reported that referring agents such as the SAPS and Social Development officials do not adhere to the admission criteria of shelters, which focus primarily on abused women. These referring agents send women who clearly do not meet the criteria for admission and then effectively abandon them at the shelters. They renege on their promises to collect the women later and transport them to the relevant places of safety; they simply switch off their cell phones. The lack of networking with other professionals is in itself problematic because at times, interventions from professionals such as psychologists and psychiatrist are critical. Networking is an effective mode of communication, and the lack thereof places social workers at a disadvantage in that they are in effect denied the opportunity to discuss difficult cases with other professionals who could provide crucial expert assistance.

According to participants, shelters do provide social support services to foreign nationals, but they lack the networking capacity to liaise with, for instance, foreign embassies. Besides the language barrier, undocumented foreign nationals and challenges with transporting foreigners back to their countries of origin, bring about often insurmountable complications. Human trafficking is another obstacle faced by these shelters as it involves a high security risk, often from crime syndicates. Inadequate resources also contribute to the ineffective functioning of these shelters. Cooperation between shelters and NGOs, some of whom work in silos, is often deficient as there is no coordinated effort to challenge a judicial system that still does not prioritise the plight of the abused woman.

4.4.5 Theme 5: Recommendations for addressing challenges

The following recommendations were made by participants to address these challenges:

- Human resource issues to be addressed.
- More professionals for the number of clients to be helped.
- Supervision of social workers.
- Professional development programmes.
- Attention to working conditions of social workers.
- Physical resources.
- Office space and communication aids for professional interviews.
- The need for effective after-care services.
- More effective follow-up services.
- Second-stage housing.

Social workers recommended that in order to improve the social support services offered to the abused women, human resources within the shelters need to be addressed and that more social service professionals need to be recruited and employed in the shelters. Most participants strongly recommended supervision of the social worker as a critical component in the provision of social support services. They referred to their interventions as “trial and error” operations; that they do not receive any feedback as to the efficacy or relevance of their efforts. Under these conditions social workers suffer significant stress and burnout, to the detriment of the abused women they are mandated to serve. Social workers believe that professional development programmes are critical in facilitating their individual professional growth, and that a broad understanding of and training related to violence against women would assist them in employing specific and dynamic intervention models. Another critical recommendation they made is that their working conditions in the shelters should be revisited. Some social workers do not have offices to conduct private and confidential counselling, but administrative

personnel are provided with large offices. In some shelters social workers have to share office space with their colleagues and other social services professionals and volunteers. They do not have the use of vehicles to conduct home visits or to transport women to other service providers outside the shelters. They do not have computers to write and store their confidential reports. In some shelters there is no electricity; and at times it is so cold and social workers are unable to carry out their daily activities and planning.

Participants highlighted the need for effective aftercare services and follow-up counselling for the women who have exited the shelters. These services are often non-existent, or at best difficult to access in their areas of residence. More effective follow-up services are needed to ascertain whether these women are coping in their home environment. Social workers recommend that government, together with the private sector and civil society organisations, should build more second-stage housing to assist employed women who wish to live independent lives, and disassociate themselves from their abusive relationships. However, it happens all too often that these women return to their abusive husband/partners because they simply have nowhere else to go.

Based on the recommendations articulated above, the researcher concluded that in general, working conditions at the shelters where social workers offer social support services are inadequate and sub-standard, and that this issue requires urgent attention.

4.4.6 Theme 6: Teamwork – internally and externally

Participants highlighted the following issues in relation to teamwork:

- Participants indicated that most managers in the shelters are not social workers.
- There is role confusion amongst shelter staff.
- Social workers reported that there is no clear job outline for social auxiliary workers in the shelters.

- Some social workers mentioned that there is no direct channel to report to the house mothers.
- Social workers claim that some stakeholders are working in silos.

Social workers also claim that most managers in the shelters are not social workers and that they do not always understand that social worker services are guided by ethics and values. In many instances they interfere in the client/social worker confidentiality setting; they wish to be privy to the women's accounts of their abuse. In some shelters social auxiliary workers do not report to the social workers – which they are supposed to do, but when problems arise the social workers are held accountable. To some extent social workers find it difficult to approach the house mothers as they mostly report to the managers, whereas the social workers are more involved in working directly with women in the shelters. Social workers contend that NGO staff often work in so-called silos, i.e., they do not share information with their colleagues. There seems to be no teamwork, internally and externally, and the social workers who deal with abused women are seldom afforded the opportunity to discuss difficult cases with colleagues.

Based on these statements, the researcher concluded that social workers find it particularly difficult to provide the coordinated, systematic social support services needed by the abused women in shelters.

4.4.7 Theme 7: Funding for effective services

Participants expressed the following views on the importance of funding in the provision of the social support services in shelters:

- Politicians need to put the needs of the abused women first, and provide sufficient funds and human resource support.
- Shelters receive limited funding from the Department of Social Development.
- Limited intervention programmes are employed due to limited operational funds.
- The lack of funding for programmes intended to develop the skills which

would enable these women to access the labour market, is another critical challenge.

- Funding allocated to NGOs, in particular the shelter sector, is limited despite the increasing hardship that these shelters, and the abused women they service, experience.
- Shelters for abused women are wholly dependent on the financial assistance from the Department of Social Development, and late payments contribute to the stress and anxiety that social workers have to contend with.

Participants reported that critical to the success of the social support services in shelters, is the financial muscle necessary to carry out their duties. Social workers are unanimous in their assertion that funding is woefully inadequate, and that more donor funding needs to be channelled into this sector. The Department of Social Development is currently the only source of funding for these shelter services, which are extended beyond their capability, preventing them from introducing more intervention programmes and acquiring much-needed equipment and other resources. Shelter services and NGOs are competing for the limited revenue provided by the Department of Social Development, and this promotes working in silos and preventing cooperation between service providers. Social workers complained that their salaries, which are paid by the Department, are not competitive and are lower than those of their counterparts who work in the department.

Based on this argument, the researcher concluded that shelters are struggling to secure sufficient funding, including donor funding, to effectively implement social support services to abused women. Social workers refer to “dry seasons” which they define as the times when the Department of Social Development has delayed signing contracts and service level agreements, which result in payment of their salaries also being delayed.

4.4.8 Theme 8: Policy alignment

Participants recommended broader policy alignment in relation to the following:

- With regard to admission criteria, there is a need for the alignment of policies which govern shelters for abused women and NGOs with that of government funding.
- The management and supervision of social workers by non-social workers should be reviewed.
- The salaries of social workers who service shelters for abused women should be on the same level/scale as those social workers who work in government.
- There is an urgent need for the Department of Social Development to develop a funding model that would enhance social work services in shelters.

Participants recommended that for effective social support services to be rendered to the abused women in shelters, the policies of government and NGOs should be aligned as this will improve the implementation and operation of management measures as well as prioritisation of social work services. This will assist shelters to implement common standardised programmes and to set boundaries and outline possible outcomes.

Based on the statements articulated above, the researcher concluded that due to all the challenges experienced by the social workers who offer social support services in shelters, abused women will continue to receive ineffective and substandard social work services, which will impede their healing; and social workers will risk career burnout. Furthermore, abused women in these shelters will not consider the work provided by social workers as effective in dealing with abuse.

4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO THE RESEARCH STUDY

Based on the research findings, the researcher has made the following recommendations for policy, education, practice, and future research.

4.5.1 Recommendations for policy

- Social workers who deal with social support services in shelters (NGOs) are struggling with limited funding and inadequate resources. A comprehensive revision of the Legislation in Victim Empowerment, and the Draft Victim Support Services Bill (2016) commissioned by the Department of Social Development is recommended. There is clearly a sense of urgency for legislation to regulate shelters and the social support services offered to the abused women. Policymakers should make provision for adequate funding for programmes in shelters, instead of funding only the social workers' and social auxiliary workers' salaries in shelters in Gauteng Province.
- Social workers reported that attention has to be given to the substandard working conditions that are not conducive to optimum service delivery. Some social workers do not have access to sufficient or suitable office space to conduct confidential counselling. Priority should be given to social support services and to create a friendly and favourable environment conducive to the effective implementation of intervention programmes in shelters by the Department of Social Development. Implementation of the norms and minimum standards in shelters is critical. However, the size of the shelters, staff capacity, and resources should also be considered. Policymakers should consider reviewing the Department of Social Development's financial policy and develop a funding model which would benefit not only the social services professionals who work in the shelters, but also the beneficiaries of these services, notably the abused women. Also of critical importance is the development of social support service guidelines to promote effective service delivery.

4.5.2 Recommendations for education or training

- Social workers reported that the training of social service professionals working in shelters is critical to improve the quality of services, because currently training is limited. There is a need for the training and development of newly recruited social workers in shelters to strengthen their knowledge

base on violence against women, in particular intervention strategies. Additional training of other social service professionals who work with abused women in shelters is required on the different, already existing legislation and policies within the sector to promote support and assistance to social workers. Training colleges and/or NGOs should conduct workshops to train social workers on a continuous basis to learn more about crisis management, the impact of violence against women, and intervention procedures and how to implement them.

- Social workers reported that they are not capacitated and trained to strengthen their knowledge base, and this is very important to improve their intervention strategies. Universities should focus on providing advance courses in the field of violence against women, including prevention and intervention courses for social workers to upgrade their professional development, and identify new models of intervention that address the complexity of the abuse currently experienced by women; this will keep social workers up to date with emerging knowledge relevant to the profession, particularly with regard to violence against women.

4.5.3 Recommendations for practice

- One of the findings reflected that social workers in the shelters focus more on the individual woman and not her family as a whole. Because of their high caseload, there is little opportunity for social workers to implement the strengths-based and developmental approach. Social workers need to utilise the developmental and strengths-based approach during their counselling and other interventions, and focus more on the strengths of the women in abusive relationships, what coping mechanisms they employ, and to determine why some women remain in these abusive relationships.
- The lack of networking facilities is a challenge as they are not afforded an opportunity to share information and learn from one another. Networking is a critical aspect of the referral process, as perpetrators also need to access social support services to combat their impulses. Social workers need more

networking resources to extend their social support services to include family therapy, which would include members of the entire family in the intervention process, and to refer the abuser or perpetrator to other available programmes. This will facilitate the smooth implementation of the reintegration programme of family members. Social workers should encourage women to seek help, report incidences of violence, access legal processes to protect themselves, and not allow abuse to damage them physically, psychologically, and emotionally.

- Social workers reported that women come to the shelters with their children. Not all shelters have programmes in place that deal with children who often witness and are exposed to violent behaviour. Because these shelters primarily focus on abused women, there is limited intervention to deal with the trauma these children experience. Suitable programmes should be developed to include support services to children and teenagers or the whole family by the Department of Social Development. All shelters should be able to implement the healing and restorative programme.
- Participants mentioned that currently social workers in shelters are working in silos; they do not get a chance to discuss their cases and they do not work closely with other stakeholders in the provision of social support services. Social workers should collaborate with other relevant stakeholders, including churches and other faith-based institutions, to offer effective and efficient services to abused women. Pastors could play a critical role in encouraging abused women to report the abuse and utilise shelters for protection and safety. Social workers should work more closely with other organisations to create awareness amongst and educate men in the community. Members of the community need to be better informed as to the resources available in shelters, which can be utilised when their lives are threatened. Through community-based efforts, these support systems can be strengthened to benefit both the social worker and the abused woman.

- Most social workers are of the view that they do not receive proper professional supervision; they are on their own. Some indicated that they are not even sure whether their intervention strategies are effective, and that it is for the most part a trial-and-error approach. Social workers should receive structured supervision from other qualified and experienced social workers to avoid compromising the profession. They have to have clear job descriptions and work plans that are aligned with the professional training they have received. They should be recognised as professionals and be allocated office space, assistance in professional counselling, interview services, and composing/writing confidential reports; and the working conditions at these shelters should be upgraded.
- Social workers indicated that they do not have an aftercare programme, but that they do follow up telephonically on the women who have exited the system, but this service is also limited. Where aftercare programmes are in operation, they have to be strengthened and extended to include effective follow-up services within the communities. Women who have left shelters should be linked or referred to an aftercare social worker in the area; if not available, the social worker should render such a service.

4.5.4 Recommendations for government

- Social workers indicated that the lack of second-stage housing is one of the challenges that force many abused women to return to an abusive relationship because they have nowhere else to go. Existing shelters should be supported and capacitated to enable social workers to provide comprehensive, integrated services to these women. Other relevant government departments, such as the Department responsible for human settlement, need to understand the plight of these abused women and the role of shelters, and prioritise the protection of these abused women by developing a second-stage housing programme. The Department responsible for women's development should also take centre stage to advocate for the development and empowerment of women by coordinating

government services to support the shelters. The Department responsible for labour and skills development programmes should give priority to the women in shelters in providing skills development and vocational programmes to assist them in securing employment.

- Social workers pointed out that over the past few years they have seen an increase in the number of abused women who enter the shelter system. These women are from different socioeconomic backgrounds, different age groups, and race. This is supported by various research studies, presented in Chapter 1 of this study. The scourge of violence against women should be on the agenda of the government. Recently there have been many cases of intimate femicide (a sex-based hate crime) and women are brutally abused and often killed by their partners or husbands. There is a dire need for government to prioritise strategic interventions to reduce violence against women, and strengthen the existing facilities that provide safety and protection to these abused women by intensifying their efforts to provide human and financial resources. It is essential that shelters be constructed in areas where there are no services for abused women.
- Social workers are of the view that due to inadequate resources public education, awareness campaigns, and prevention programmes are not implemented extensively. Shelters conduct community outreach programmes on an individual basis and on a smaller scale, with the aim to market their social support services. Government has a duty to develop and strengthen communication strategies and awareness, prevention, and protection programmes through coordinated initiatives. Public education and awareness programmes should be extended to communities in rural and underdeveloped areas.
- Participants reiterated that the funding allocated to NGOs to render effective sheltering services is inadequate, and that the capacity of social workers to effectively render social support services to abused women should be enhanced. The government should fund more NGOs that could provide

safety and protective services to abused women in shelters. The researcher therefore recommends that more funding should be injected into NGOs that are providing services to abused women in shelters. Government should upgrade the salary scales of social workers who offer social support services to abused women in shelters, and put their remuneration on a par with those of other social workers in government. This would enable them to make ends meet, and motivate them to boost the standard of service delivery. This would add to the capacity of social workers who deal with this pandemic.

4.5.5 Recommendations for further research

Based on the findings, the following aspects need to be considered for further research:

- This study was conducted in Gauteng Province and focused on the Tshwane and Johannesburg regions. Only female social workers participated as there were no male social workers in the identified shelters. More research could be conducted in other provinces and include both male and female social workers to gain a richer understanding of the phenomenon under study.
- There is a need for further investigation as to how social workers can work closely with other relevant stakeholders and professionals to provide multidisciplinary interventions which would empower women who are victims of abuse.
- Research should be conducted to explore the experiences and challenges of other social service professions working within the shelters for abused women in other provinces.
- More research should be conducted in order to evaluate the effectiveness of family support groups that are rendered by other NGOs and government facilities.

4.6 CONCLUSIONS OF THIS CHAPTER

Chapter 4 presents an overview and summaries of how the research goal and objectives have been achieved. The researcher summarised the research findings according to themes, subthemes, conclusions, and recommendations. Research findings were verified using literature control and other previously researched studies. The participants shared their real life experiences, challenges, and recommendations in offering social support services to abused women in shelters. In addition, they also highlighted their needs and the support they require.

From the discussions, the recommendations relating to policy, education, practice, government involvement, and further research are deemed appropriate. The researcher is confident that the findings of this research study will contribute to the understanding and improvement of the social support services offered to the abused women in shelters.

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ADDENDA

Addendum 1

| |
|---|
| A LETTER REQUESTING INDIVIDUALS' PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH PROJECT |
|---|

Dear Participant

I, Anna Sithole, am a social worker in service of the National Department of Social Development in Pretoria, and also a part-time master's student in the Department of Social Work at the University of South Africa. In fulfilment of requirements for the master's degree, I have to undertake a research project and have consequently decided to focus on the following research "Social support services for abused women in shelters: perspectives of social workers"

In view of the fact that you are well-informed about the topic, I hereby approach you with the request to participate in the study. For you to decide whether or not to participate in this research project, I am going to give you information that will help you to understand the study (i.e. what the aims of the study are and why there is a need for this particular study). Furthermore, you will be informed about what your involvement in this study will entail (i.e. what you will be asked or what you will be requested to do during the study, the risks and benefits involved by participating in this research project, and your rights as a participant in this study).

The researcher has observed that more often than not, when a woman is experiencing violence at home or within the community, they are referred to the police station for reporting the case and when their lives are threatened then for safety and protection police will refer them to the nearest shelter as prescribed by the Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998. The majority of women who are

accommodated in the shelters have experienced physical, rape or sexual assault, verbal, emotional and psychological abuse (Jewkes, 2002).

In most cases the abuser is either the partner or a family member. Recently, the researcher has received complaints regarding the treatment received by some victims of crime and violence from certain shelters across the country which led to the interest to conduct research on the experience-based perceptions of victims of crime and violence in relation to services offered by shelters.

Should you agree to participate, you would be requested to participate in one face-to-face interview that will be conducted at your organisation from 10:00 to 12:00. It is estimated that the interview(s) will last approximately 45 minutes. During the interview the following questions will be directed to you:

- Share with me the kind of stories do they (women) tell.
- Tell me how often do you get the debriefing and how does it help.
- Tell me more about other kinds of service you offer for the abused women.
- In your opinion what are the reasons for not having second stage housing developed?
- Share with me how you empower the women.
- In your opinion, what makes it difficult for the organisation to monitor the women once they have exited the organisation?
- Tell me about the procedure for referral and reintegration of women?

With your permission, the interview will be audiotaped. The recorded interviews will be transcribed word-for-word. Your responses to the interview (both the taped and transcribed versions) will be kept strictly confidential. The audiotape(s) will be coded to disguise any identifying information. The tapes will be stored in a locked office at the Department of Social Development in Pretoria in a steel locked cabinet and only I will have access to them. The transcripts (without any identifying information) will be made available to my research supervisor, a translator (if they need to be translated into English), and an independent coder with the sole purpose of assisting and guiding me with this research undertaking. My research supervisor,

the translator and the independent coder will each sign an undertaking to treat the information shared by you in a confidential manner.

The audiotapes and the transcripts of the interviews will be destroyed upon completion of the study. Identifying information will be deleted or disguised in any subsequent publication and/or presentation of the research findings.

Please note that participation in the research is completely voluntary. You are not obliged to take part in the research. Your decision to participate, or not to participate, will not affect you in any way now or in the future and you will incur no penalty and/or loss to which you may otherwise be entitled. Should you agree to participate and sign the information and informed consent document herewith, as proof of your willingness to participate, please note that you are not signing your rights away.

If you agree to take part, you have the right to change your mind at any time during the study. You are free to withdraw this consent and discontinue participation without any loss of benefits. However, if you do withdraw from the study, you would be requested to grant me an opportunity to engage in informal discussion with you so that the research partnership that was established can be terminated in an orderly manner.

As the researcher, I also have the right to dismiss you from the study without regard to your consent if you fail to follow the instructions or if the information you have to divulge is emotionally sensitive and upset you to such an extent that it hinders you from functioning physically and emotionally in a proper manner. Furthermore, if participating in the study at any time jeopardises your safety in any way, you will be dismissed.

Should I conclude that the information you have shared left you feeling emotionally upset, or perturbed, I am obliged to refer you to a counsellor for debriefing or counselling (should you agree).

You have the right to ask questions concerning the study at any time. Should you have any questions or concerns about the study, contact these numbers **(012) 429-6388 / 082 864 0600**

Please note that this study has been approved by the Research and Ethics Committee of the Department of Social Work at Unisa. Without the approval of this committee, the study cannot be conducted. Should you have any questions and queries not sufficiently addressed by me as the researcher, you are more than welcome to contact the Chairperson of the Research and Ethics Committee of the Department of Social Work at Unisa. His contact details are as follows: Dr AH (Nicky) Alpaslan, telephone number: 012 429 6739, or email alpasah@unisa.ac.za.

If, after you have consulted the researcher and the Research and Ethics Committee in the Department of Social Work at Unisa, their answers have not satisfied you, you may direct your question/concerns/queries to the Chairperson, Human Ethics Committee, College of Human Science, PO Box 392, Unisa, 0003.

Based upon all the information provided to you above, and being aware of your rights, you are asked to give your written consent should you want to participate in this research study by signing and dating the information and consent form provided herewith and initialling each section to indicate that you understand and agree to the conditions.

Thank you for your participation.

Kind regards

Researcher

Anna Sithole

Contact details: (O): 012 312 7870
(Fax): 012 312 7541
(Email): annas@dsd.gov.za

Addendum 2: Consent form for participants

INFORMATION AND INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: SOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES FOR ABUSED WOMEN IN SHELTERS: PERSPECTIVES OF SOCIAL WORKERS

REFERENCE NUMBER: 7882718

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR/RESEARCHER: ANNA SITHOLE

ADDRESS: 134 PRETORIOUS STREET HSRC BUILDING, PRETORIA

CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBER: 012 312 7870

| | <u>Initial</u> |
|--|----------------|
| DECLARATION BY OR ON BEHALF OF THE PARTICIPANT: | |
| I, THE UNDERSIGNED, _____ (name), [ID No: _____] the participant or in my capacity as _____ of the participant [ID No _____] of _____ _____ _____(address) | |
| A. HEREBY CONFIRM AS FOLLOWS: | |
| 1. I/the participant was invited to participate in the above research project which is being undertaken by Anna Sithole of the Department of Social Work in the School of Social Science and Humanities at the University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa. | |
| 2. The following aspects have been explained to me/the participant: | |

| | |
|--|----------------|
| Aim: To explore and describe the experiences of social workers offering the social support services to abused women in shelters. | |
| 2.1 I understand that I am freely participating and that any time that I feel uncomfortable, I am free to withdraw from the study or inform the researcher of my discomfort. | |
| 2.2 Risks: There will be no risk. | |
| 2.3 Possible benefits: As a result of my participation in the study on social support services for abused in shelters: perspective of social workers | |
| Confidentiality: My identity will not be revealed in any discussion, description or scientific publications by the investigators/researchers. | |
| Access to findings: Any new information/benefit that develops during the course of the study will be shared with me. | <u>Initial</u> |
| Voluntary participation/refusal/discontinuation: My participation is voluntary. My decision whether or not to participate will in no way affect me now or in the future. | <u>Initial</u> |
| The information above was explained to me/the participant by Anna Sithole in /English/Sotho/Zulu and I am in command of this language/it was translated to me satisfactorily by _____ (name of the translator). I was given the opportunity to ask questions and all these questions were answered satisfactorily. | <u>Initial</u> |
| 3. No pressure was exerted on me to consent to participate and I understand that I may withdraw at any stage from the study without any penalty. | <u>Initial</u> |
| 4. Participation in this study will not result in any additional cost to me. | <u>Initial</u> |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | | |
| <p>B. I HEREBY CONSENT VOLUNTARILY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ABOVE PROJECT.</p> <p>Signed/confirmed at _____ on _____ 20__</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Signature or right thumbprint of participant Signature of witness</p> | | |

| CONSENT FORM REQUESTING PERMISSION TO PUBLISH AUDIOTAPES AND/OR VERBATIM TRANSCRIPTS OF AUDIOTAPE RECORDINGS | |
|---|--|
| <p>As part of this project, I have made audio recordings of you. I would like you to indicate (with ticks in the appropriate blocks next to each statement below) what uses of these records you are willing to consent to. This is completely up to you. I will use the records only in ways that you agree to. In any of these records, names will not be identified.</p> | <p>Place a tick [✓] next to the use of the record you consent to</p> |
| 1. The records can be studied by the research team and quotations from the transcripts made of the recordings can be used in the research report. | |
| 2. The records (quotations from the transcripts made of the recordings) can be used for scientific publications and/or meetings. | |
| 3. The written transcripts and/or records can be used by other researchers. | |
| 4. The records (quotations from the transcripts made of the | |

Addendum 3: Consent form for social worker for debriefing

IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO PARTICIPANT/REPRESENTATIVE OF PARTICIPANT

Dear Participant/Representative of participant

Thank you for your/the participant's participation in this study. Should at any time during the study

- an emergency arise as a result of the research, or you require any further information with regard to the study, kindly contact **(012) 429-6388 / 082 864 0600** at the Department of Social Work at the **University of South Africa**

Addendum 4: Letter of approval to conduct the study



Addendum 5: Letter of approval/permission to conduct the study



MERCY HOUSE
(014-682 NPO)

TEL: (012) 329-6682/5528

FAX: (012) 329-4018

**407 FLOWERS STREET
CAPITAL PARK
P. O. BOX 24279
GEZINA
PRETORIA 0031**

03 May 2016

Mrs Anna Sithole
National Department of Social Development
Pretoria

Dear Mrs Sithole

RE: RESEACH STUDY PERMISSION

This letter serves as confirmation that Mercy House grants you permission to carry out your research studies on “Social support services for abused in shelters: perspective of social workers” at Mercy House.

We hope that your research will benefit the victims and the shelters in the future.

Best wishes
Sr Colleen Wilkinson
Director – Mercy House Manager

Addendum 6: Thank you letter to the participants

Enquiries: Ms. Anna Sithole

Tel No: 012 312 7870

Cell No: 071 148 1810

Fax No: 012 312 7541

Dear Participant

Re: Thank you letter for voluntary participating in the research study

Thank you for your/the participant's participation in this study. Your cooperation is highly appreciated. Once the study report has been approved, I will send you the copy of the report.

Yours in Community Service

Mrs Anna Sithole

Social Work Policy Manager

Date: 10 November 2017

Cell No: 061 491 0045/0711481810

Addendum 7: Declaration of the independent coder

DECLARATION BY INDEPENDENT CODER

I, Suzanne S. Tebban, confirm that I

- had access to the transcripts of the data obtained through this study;
- I did not have access to any information that could enable me to identify the participants; and
- I will adhere to the agreement of confidentiality relating to the data obtained.

Signed at Snowden West on 21 Aug. 2017

(place)

(date)

S. Tebban
Signature of independent coder

J. Foul
Signature of witness

Addendum 8: Letter from the editor

CERTIFICATE OF VERACITY

MASTER'S OF ARTS IN SOCIAL SCIENCE SOCIAL WORK

SOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES FOR ABUSED WOMEN IN SHELTERS: PERSPECTIVES OF SOCIAL WORKERS

ANNA SITHOLE
(7882718)

I, the undersigned, hereby certify that the editing process comprised the following:

Language editing

- Syntax.
- Sentence construction.
- Grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
- Appropriate word selection.
- Final proofreading.

Format/layout editing




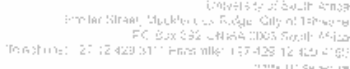
- Uniformity in page layout.
- Comparing in-text citations/sources in reference list.

| | | |
|------------------|---|-----------------|
| Freelance editor | : | S M Bell |
| Completed | : | December 2017 |
| Signature | : | <i>Suz Bell</i> |



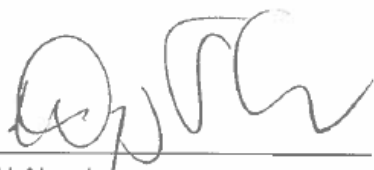
TRANS-EDIT - EDITING & AUDIO TRANSCRIPTIONS
Cell: 072 685 8040 / 072 953 7415
Website: www.manu-type.co.za
Email: mt@trans-edit.co.za

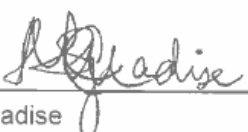
Addendum 9: Acceptance letter from the Ethics Committee

| | | |
|---|--|--|
|  |  | |
| DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH AND ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE | | |
| 20 January 2017 | <table border="1"><tr><td>Ref#: R&EC_24/11/16/7882718_01 Name of Applicant: Sithole, A Student#: 7882718</td></tr></table> | Ref#: R&EC_24/11/16/7882718_01 Name of Applicant: Sithole, A Student#: 7882718 |
| Ref#: R&EC_24/11/16/7882718_01 Name of Applicant: Sithole, A Student#: 7882718 | | |
| Dear Mrs Sithole | | |
| <u>DECISION: ETHICAL APPROVAL</u> | | |
| <hr/> | | |
| <input type="radio"/> | Name Mrs A Sithole | |
| Address & contact details 763 Ramonotsi Street, Mapetla, Soweto | | |
| Contact No: 071 148 1810 / 012 312 7870 | | |
| Supervisor: Ms RM Skhosana | | |
| Title of Proposal: <i>SOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES FOR ABUSED WOMEN IN SHELTERS: PERSPECTIVES OF SOCIAL WORKERS</i> | | |
| Qualification: Master of Social Work | | |
| <hr/> | | |
| <input type="radio"/> | Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Department Of Social Work Research And Ethics Review Committee. | |
| The application was reviewed in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics by the abovementioned Committee at a meeting conducted on 24 November 2016. | | |
| Final approval is granted for the duration of the project. | | |
| The proposed research may now commence with the proviso that: | | |
|  |  | |

- 1) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
- 2) Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to the Department of Social Work's Research and Ethics Review Committee. An amended application could be requested of there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for the participants.
- 3) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study.

Kind regards,

Signed by:  Date: 20 January 2017
Professor AH Alpaslan
Chair: Department of Social Work Research and Ethics Review Committee
alpasah@unisa.ac.za

Signed by:  Date: 20 January 2017
Prof MPJ Madise
Manager Postgraduate Studies: College of Human Sciences



Addendum 10: Interview Guide

- Tell me more about your experiences in offering social support services to abused women in shelters.
- Share with me the kind of social support services you offer in these shelters.
- Tell me about the challenges that you experience in offering these social support services to abused women.
- In your opinion, what suggestions or recommendations would you offer to improve the social support services rendered to the women accommodated in shelters?

The following were added after the interview guide had been revised, subsequent to pilot testing:

- Share with me the kind of stories the (women) tell.
- Tell me how often you are debriefed, and how it helps.
- Tell me more about other kinds of services you offer for the abused women.
- In your opinion, what are the reasons for not having second-stage housing developed?
- Share with me how you empower the women.
- In your opinion, what makes it difficult for the organisation to monitor the women once they have exited the organisation?
- Tell me about the procedure for the referral and reintegration of women.